

*putting music in its place*

# Collision

(2)

Feb - April 1982

8012

PARANOID SEX in 60s SOUL •  
BEACH BOYS • MANSON • ANGER  
FILMING THIRD WORLD MUSIC •  
CAROL KAYE • BEBOP VOCALS  
Martin Denny • Les Baxter • Sun Ra  
GRACIE FIELDS • GAVIN BRYARS  
Cajun Weekend • Northern Soul •  
LOL COXHILL • VERNARD JOHNSON •  
DISHARI • R.P.M.  
Asian Film Music



'OUTSIDE OF YOUR  
MUSIC YOU CHERISH  
ALL THE  
STANDARD VIRTUES'

# Collusion

COLLUSION 2  
February/April 1982

Dear Reader,

Producing a magazine like COLLUSION in our 'spare' time and with no financial backing can sometimes be a bit of a nightmare. Things go wrong and a tight schedule or tiredness means that they don't get corrected. This sheet corrects some of the omissions and errors of issue 2. Sorry if it keeps falling out. . . .

TERRIBLE OMISSIONS:

The address for CADILLAC record distribution (ad. on p. 44) is: 180 Shaftesbury Avenue, London, WC2H 8SJ, England. telephone: 01 - 836 3646.

CAROL KAYE (p. 20): Carol Kaye was interviewed by Sue Steward on 2 occasions over the telephone in March 1981.

HIDEOUS MISPLACEMENT OF CORRECTIONS:

Page 7. Omit the line "some girls on the Nile and heard" in column 3 and flip it over to column 4, line 9.

Page 25 (centre spread - SUN RA section). line 15 should say: "and early '60s tended to mix heavily echoed percussion, electric keyboards, neo-classical piano, wordless vocals and the like -". The bit about the electronic Ondes Martenot should drop a few lines to refer to Messiaen (correct spelling!).

TOTAL AND UTTER BLUNDERS:

ENKA (pages 17 to 19): the IMPOSSIBLE LOVE section on page 18 refers to a song called 'Flower and Butterfly'. Don't search too long for it. It was left out. Here it is - as recorded by Mori Shinichi. . .

"Is the flower a woman? Is the butterfly a man?  
Receiving a kiss from the butterfly, when the flower wilts  
The butterfly dies.  
I want to a woman  
Who has such a love (affair).

When the flower blossoms, The butterfly flies around,  
When the butterfly dies, The flower wilts.  
Both are full of the spring  
Colourfully  
Both, both  
Risking their lives.

The life of the flower is short, But the life of the  
butterfly is also brief. When the flower wilts  
The butterfly dies.  
I want the two of us  
To have that kind of love."

Kazuko Hohki's cartoon on page 19 is even more obscure than her original due to the exhausted paste-up person sticking it down in the wrong order. 1 should be 3/2 should be 1/OK?

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Issue 2

FEB - APRIL 1982

## COLLUSION

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## CONTENTS

Rhythms of Resistance — an interview with music film-maker Jeremy Marre .....	4
Revolutions and Mister Dolly Parton — Records and r.p.m. by John Oswald .....	8
Paranoid Sex in 60s Soul by Nick Kimberley .....	9
East/West: Dishari, Bengali group by Hannah Charlton .....	12
Surfin' (Death Valley) USA by David Toop .....	14
Enka: Japanese Ballads by Kazuko Hohki and Clive Bell .....	17
Ghost in the Hit Mythology — Sue Steward talks to Carol Kaye .....	20
Three Bips and a Bop — Bebop Vocalists by Steve Beresford .....	22
One Step Beyond .....	24
Gavin Bryars interviewed .....	26
Indian Film Music by Sheryl Garratt .....	29
Northern Soul — Simon Frith's homage to Gracie Fields .....	32
Vernard Johnson, Gospel Saxophonist by Steve Beresford .....	34
A Cajun Weekend — Graham Ewens travels in 'The Labyrinth Time Forgot'	35
Long After Tonight is All Over — Stuart Cosgrove on Northern Soul .....	38
Cassettes — The Editors' Choices .....	41
The Artist's Manipulation of the Media — The Lol Coxhill Column .....	42

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# Rhythms of Resistance



Celia Cruz and husband in N.Y. recording studio, with cameraman, Chris Morphet.

If there is one area of culture, social expression and entertainment that television has entirely failed to come to terms with it is music. Programmes which outweigh the disadvantage of those little loudspeakers with any reflection of music's vibrancy, popular appeal or social relevance are as keenly sought and rarely sighted as the Loch Ness Monster. If you've noticed the occasional TV film over the last 5 years which sets all that on its head then it was probably directed by Jeremy Marre, an independent film-maker resident in London.

Since 1977 his films on reggae, black music of South Africa, Brazil and Nigeria, Salsa and Gypsy music have combined a portrayal of social contexts and historical background with enormous visual and musical excitement. Music is shown as political struggle as well as a sound for listening and dancing. In September 1981 David Toop interviewed Jeremy Marre and sound-recordist Greg Bailey at the BBC television centre in White City.

**COLLUSION:** How did you come to make films about music — was it through film-making, sociology or music interest?

**Jeremy Marre:** Music interest really — and film-making interest — insofar as I'm basically a filmmaker and not a musician but I like all sorts of music. It seemed to me that there was a scope for doing music programmes that weren't specifically musical — that didn't concentrate on music as a form of entertainment

or relaxation but would try and show music as a real social force that can get things changed . . . a dynamic force in society through which people traditionally have expressed their problems of day to day life. That was the idea behind this series — to get away from any cloistered attitudes towards music and open it up. At the same time one would be looking at the sources of our own popular music.



*In fact the reggae film came out in 1977 — one of the peaks of interest in that music!*

**JM:** Yes. It was popular with the audience but even after I'd made it LWT, Thames and Southern refused it and three departments of the BBC refused it. All of them said that there was no interest in reggae and it was completely monotonous and boring. "World About Us" refused it and it was finally bought by Special Programmes or something. When they found it was popular they ran it again. So there is a gulf between a grass-roots view of subjects and the establishment view of subjects.

*That was the most accessible film in that it was about a music which is created in this country. What was the response to the next one — the South Africa One ("Rhythm of Resistance") — was that even more difficult or did the success of the first help the second?*

**JM:** No. If anything it was detrimental because as the programmers didn't like it and didn't like the music they didn't want another programme like it. Chris Austin came along and suggested South African music as the next programme and he had contacts out there so we decided to make it together. I went to see Melvyn Bragg and the subject appealed to him on a political level, not on a musical level, and quite a bit of music was cut out in the final version. It was done on the basis of a one-off "South Bank Show" about resistance to apartheid expressed by musicians. They wouldn't put any money up-front in case we didn't come back though we had a letter saying they'd pay some money if we came back with acceptable rushes.

## TELE'S LACK OF VISION

*When you say series — did you have in mind the countries you would go to?*

**JM:** It wasn't very specific. I wanted to cover areas of the Third World, developing societies, but also some developed countries — like Salsa in the States which shows the interaction of Afro-Cuban music with New York pacing and culture. The first film — reggae (*Roots Rock Reggae*) — was almost a one-off insofar as I'd done a programme for London Weekend Television quite a few years ago on Brixton reggae called "British Reggae". I wanted them to trace that back to Jamaica but none of the companies I went to were interested and I discovered that after I'd been to see them some of the departments were planning to make it themselves so we scraped together a very basic amount of money and went and shot it very quickly — 2½ weeks — in Jamaica. Obviously in Jamaica the music has its political uses, its religious aspects and at the same time it has influenced quite a bit what's going on in the West — the idea of a series developed out of that. No company I went to was the slightest bit interested. For one thing they have a pigeon-hole mentality that a programme is either music or sociology or travel. Also, they felt that there wasn't much general interest.

## SIDE-STEPPING THE SECRET SERVICE

**JM:** We managed to sidestep the authorities from place to place — there was obviously a lot of pressure out there. We were followed much of the time but we got the stuff back and when they saw it was all there they gave us some money. The rest of the money was scraped up from here and there as it always is. We found the South African Secret Service to be incredibly inept. When they did follow us it was two fat men in shades in a very brightly coloured car just three feet behind. Generally, we travelled

at night and we'd pull off into a side-turning. They'd go thundering past at 70 m.p.h. with the radio blaring and then we'd get on with what we were doing.

*So what was the response to that film? Was there any sensitivity to the political content?*

JM: No, because the commercial companies have a different attitude from the BBC. On the BBC everything has to be balanced so I don't think they'd have run the programme, but on ITV so long as at some time during the year there's another programme which vaguely balances it up, that's OK. There wasn't any other sensitivity apart from the South Africans here who did some heavy breathing over the telephone. We'd been fairly honest in that we said what we were doing, unlike some film crews who give them a completely phoney story. We always told the interviewees or performers what we were doing so that if they didn't want to appear they needn't.

### DODGING MIDDLE-CLASS FOLKLORE

*One thing I like about the films is that they are showing music that's popular in those countries. There's such a tradition of the conventional idea of ethnic music being something from an a-historical time — nothing to do with what's going on now. Are you very conscious of that?*

JM: Yes. I'm very conscious of attitudes here; for example, if you go to a Third World country you go to the local folkloric troupe who are recreating something phoney but something historical which doesn't touch too closely what's going on in the society. It's usually very middle class anyway because it's run by a doctor's wife or a politician's cousin. I didn't want to do something folkloric; I wanted to do something on street level that was very much about

people's lives and how they expressed their life. It's OK touching on history where it's relevant to that but not when it's folkloric — people jumping around in costumes for the camera.

We've tried, on the whole, not to set things up too much but to do them in real settings. Obviously, in a place like Nigeria you've got to organise the musicians but we put Kukuro in the street with a long lens and a little radio mike so that it was quite natural what happened to him. We were hidden at a distance.

*Greg, what was the first film you worked on with Jeremy?*

GB: The Nigerian one ("Kon-kombe").

*Had you recorded a lot of music before?*

GB: Yes, I've tried to specialise in music, especially folk music. I love folk music. There's so much music in the world that people in England don't know anything about at all. There's a whole world of music out there and people are incredibly ignorant about it.

JM: I don't know why — they're certainly less so in other European countries. Certainly in France, Germany, Holland — all these musicians are known there and tour there. The Salsa musicians are an example — you've got Celia Cruz going on tours but she never comes here.

*I think even if they do come here there's such a feeling that there's no interest outside that particular community that you never get to hear about it. A lot of African musicians have in fact played here but it's very low key and restricted.*

JM: Yes, just to the local population. Sunny Ade comes over every so often but you never hear of him. He just plays local dances and things.



Jack Ruby (seated centre left) being filmed as he auditions young hopefuls in his backyard — Ocho Rios, Jamaica.

### RECORD COMPANIES TEST THE WATER

*You made a record with Virgin. How did that come about?*

JM: They put up a tiny bit of money for "Roots Rock Reggae" which they never expected to see and for which we had to make them an additional promotional of their artists while we were in Jamaica. So we were doing these ridiculous promotional of the Gladiators and the Mighty Diamonds. Then they decided that they'd put up some more money for "Rhythm of Resistance" — particularly as they've got some music publishing deal out there for their artists. They sent an engineer down with whom we did some work in a studio and then they put it out. I don't think the response was ever very great to the record. Also, the record was a strange compromise because I don't think they decided what they wanted out of it. They were half trying to put across the feeling of the film and half trying to make it commercial.

GB: They'd have been better off going for a documentary feel.

JM: Yes, instead of Babsy Mlangeni doing sentimental ballads with a heavy backing. I don't think they really worked out what they were doing.

*I think a lot of people feel it was only partly successful.*

JM: Well, we weren't very happy with it. It's a shame because that's the only experiment we did with a record to accompany the film.

GB: The BBC were going to put something out with the Nigerian film.

JM: (laughs) I had so many large lunches which is what you have to

do — at the end of which they asked me to send them a cassette of a selection so I spent hours and hours going through the tapes making a selection and never got an answer of course. So about 15 phone calls later I got a letter saying: "Thank you. We listened to some of the tape and don't think it's really suitable."

*Did you include a whole cross-section of what was in the film?*

JM: Yes. I started with reggae. It was all the films in fact.

*Oh! I see. It sounds great.*

GB: There were some things that were absolute gems — like Kukuro.

JM: There is a problem with record companies now they're not making so much money — they're not willing to take risks.

### NIGERIAN JUJU MUSIC

*One of the things I find very exciting about juju music is the way the influences are piled together — you get Hawaiian guitars, Shadows guitar, talking drums, Latin influences — it comes out sounding really vibrant.*

JM: Strange the way so much has come back. First of all it went out and now it has come back from all sorts of directions.

GB: Who's the old chap in Nigeria who sang with his wife?

JM: Julius Araba.

*Oh, was that the man whose wife suddenly gave a speech completely annihilating him?*

JM: Yes, that's right. She was so pissed off with him it was unbelievable. We had to pay him secretly in the back of a car so his wife wouldn't know how



Area Scatter — female impersonator about to perform for a local king in E. Nigeria (formerly known as Biafra). Scatter also practises voodoo and claims to have changed sex during seven years self-imposed isolation.

## Rhythms of Resistance

much money he had and then he went racing off to the local brothel. That was the last that was ever seen of Julius Araba.

I think she got her own back — denouncing him to the world on film.

JM: She was delighted to have the opportunity. It's really nice when people use film like that — they've been dying to do something or say something for ages and they're finally given the opportunity. They pirated that cassette in Nigeria — the video — and it's on sale in the music shops so it would have been seen by many Nigerians.

The other thing we've been trying to do is always send copies of the films back to the countries where we made them so we haven't just walked off with peoples' culture. We gave Jimmy Cliff some prints of "Roots Rock Reggae" and he went and sold them in Latin America. They were never seen in Jamaica which is infuriating. I got a phone call saying: "Why haven't we seen the film?" But in every other case we've sent one back. We sent one to Djalma Correa and he's been showing it around which is nice. They have parties and invite the musicians round.



A Macumba ritual in black suburb of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

### SALSA CITY

The Salsa film "Salsa Music" is apparently still talked about a lot in New York.

GB: In many ways it was one of the most successful as a film.

I found it very exciting to see that music on English television.

JM: One or two of the artists and some of the Puerto Ricans were a bit worried when they saw the film because they're so anxious to be accepted by the mainstream population. They didn't want to be differentiated from other people. They wanted to be shown in fast cars and middle class houses. I had a bit of a backlash there and



Lijadu Sisters sweating it out in the local Decca recording studio in Lagos, Nigeria.

some really vitriolic letters from Jerry Masucci's company — Fania. The last one was just — don't run into us next time you're in town. It's a kind of mafia-based organisation.

And monopolistic as well. I get the impression that some of the musicians would like to break out.

JM: They've got a real stranglehold and there are many stories of artists ending up with broken arms and legs who've signed up with other labels.

I really enjoyed that film but the only criticism I have of it is that it seemed to concentrate very strongly on Puerto Rico. It didn't bring across Cuba as one of the main roots of the music.

JM: I originally wanted to film in Cuba very much but the Cubans absolutely refused any film that was going to be shot in New York incorporating Salsa as they understood it. I went to talk to the head of the Cuban Film Institute in Prague and he said absolutely no way are you going to be permitted to come, and if we do let you in you're going to have to film what we want and you may not include any New York Salsa at all. That ruled them out really because you just can't be dictated to. I couldn't find any library material that was particularly useful on the subject when I was in the States. Apart from using Celia Cruz — who is Cuban — and mentioning the Cuban connections along with some old footage from Cuban nightclubs that was it. I know it's a shortcoming but for that reason it's oriented more towards New Yorkers or Newricans and

where they come from which is largely Puerto Rico, and away from the musical roots of Salsa itself.

But it's just one of the compromises. It's so difficult when you're filming. In many countries they're very sensitive about what the music is saying and the conditions from which the music springs. In fact I was refused permission by the Jamaicans to film on reggae in '77 and we gave them a treatment saying we were making a film on calypso with a little bit of reggae and jazz. The Americans were very sensitive about us filming in New York in South Bronx. It's one thing to go there and listen to the music and even make field recordings but when you turn up with camera equipment you have to import it officially. Then you're up against the bureaucracy and that's where the problems arise.

☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

### STREET MUSICIANS AND STARS

There's always kind of an equality in the films between street musicians and stars like Gilberto Gil, Charlie Palmieri or Sunny Ade. Do you find there's a big discrepancy between filming those people and talking to them?

JM: It depends on the personalities. Some people are appallingly difficult — like Fela (Anikulapo-Kuti) who talks in tens of thousands of dollars as soon as he hears the word film but who in the end — if you spend enough time with him — will come around. Sunny Ade was very approachable. He's terribly gentlemanly. He served

me tea in a silver tea set. He was very nice and Sonny Okosun who is something of a superstar — or thinks he is — is fairly approachable and felt it was good publicity for him.

Brazil is a bit unlike anywhere else because no-one was really worried about money — it was really refreshing from that point of view. In West Africa money is everything but in Brazil nobody worried about it and it was only a question of getting through to Milton Nascimento and Chico Buarque and persuading them that the film was worthwhile. They didn't feel they needed the publicity. They wanted to be in it because other people were in it — it was of interest to them and I was working with friends of theirs who they had a certain amount of trust in. So in their case although they were terribly temperamental — Chico was ridiculous — he refused to play because he didn't have his own guitar and then it was getting too late. He was



I.K. Dairo (juju music pioneer) on the balcony of his flat in Nigeria.



Gilberto Gil with drummer Djalma Correa (who was adviser in Brazil) on verandah of his house in Salvador (Bahia).

terribly highly strung and nervous. Apart from temperament they were highly approachable.

Probably the worst of all was Jimmy Cliff in Jamaica who kept us waiting a day and a half and then wouldn't do it unless we bought him a refrigerator and half a carpet. It was a total fiasco. It's unpleasant sometimes and in the end you just don't bother. You just turn around and say — if that's your attitude why should we include you in the film? On other occasions it's important to get them because you feel that they're a real moving force and it's necessary to include them. Like Bob Marley, of course. It was almost impossible to film him but by actually talking to him I got round all his agent's reservations. He had an appalling manager called Don Taylor — he sacked him after a while.

*Did he get shot at the same time as Bob Marley?*

JM: Yes. He claimed he saved Bob Marley but Bob Marley and the others always said it was just to save his investment. There it's just a question of persuading people that the subject is important — it's important to me — that I have a certain conviction. I'm not just out there because it's another job. It's important to put across the idea that music is relevant to their lives and their societies and to let the artists — either in interview or in the music express what they want to say.

That's something we always try and do in the films — we don't go there with a fixed point of view. What we say to people is: "Well, we've got an idea, we've got an outline — what you want to do and what you want to say is as important as what we want to do." So we try and fit them together and give people as much scope as possible. That way I think the films are much more alive — people are giving them what they want to give and you're not putting them in a given situation or dragging them into a studio somewhere.

*I think it's very important to go into that situation with an open mind. People tend to make so many sweeping generalisations about the kind of musics we're talking about — say in Nigeria Fela is supposed to be right on politically and Sunny Ade reactionary. I think it's nonsensical. There are so many contradictions involved in those people's positions.*

JM: It's like Fela — above all people. He puts such a price on his own head even for an interview and there he is with his 27 wives who he beats and locks in a tin shed when they misbehave or don't do what he wants them to do. On the other hand, people look up to him as some ultra-progressive political person. It depends how you view it really.

#### GYPSY MUSIC

*Can you tell me about the new films?*

JM: The Gypsies ("Gypsy Music") — yes. What I'm basically doing in two films is tracing the historic gypsy migrations — one westward from India through Egypt and into Spain. The other more or less northwards from India through Asia to east and west Europe. Then looking at the lives of the gypsies because gypsies in a way are a south within the north, a Third World within the West. They preserve their own language. Here I'm not talking about England but about almost everywhere else in Europe. I'm talking about 6,000,000 European gypsies, 5,000,000 of whom are in the East, in the Communist countries. People who have preserved their own music, their own myths, traditions, religion and their own Romany language.

In some countries like Yugoslavia and Hungary the gypsies in many cases don't speak the national language fluently; they speak Romany at home. It's very much an enclosed community — partly because they want to

preserve their own traditions and partly because of the enormous social prejudice against them as non-conformists — particularly in East Europe where it's regarded as pretty intolerable; where no-one is allowed to travel. They have to be settled in order to have any state benefits. So that pretty well all 5,000,000 gypsies in East Europe are settled in gypsy suburbs. We went to these places and, again, they use their music because they have no written traditions at all.

Romany has never been a written language since ten centuries ago in India and all the history of the gypsies has been carried in song and myth. They're some girls on the Nile and heard probably the last people in Europe with a living, developing folklore — everywhere else it's dying out. It's a really interesting time to be doing the film because there was a World Gypsy Congress in Göttingen, Germany, in May and gypsies all over the world — except for certain Communist countries which wouldn't let their delegates attend — came together. They could speak to each other in Romany and they're suddenly realising that they're a people with about 10,000,000 in total — a huge people with enormous common cultural interests. It's a very exciting time to be doing it since it's a kind of rebirth of gypsy culture.

#### GUEST WORKERS IN THEIR OWN COUNTRY

JM: So we went to Spain and looked at the real gypsy flamenco — not the commercialised flamenco, it's something entirely different. In Egypt nobody knew about the gypsies at all. We had to start from scratch and from a few hints from people who had seen these girls on the Nile and heard them speaking a strange language. We travelled down there and met them. A whole network of gypsy musicians, conjurers and acrobats opened up — all kinds of traditional gypsy occupations. We followed them up through east Europe, through Yugoslavia where they're trying to get the status of a national minority now. All this is expressed in traditional music. It's not Indian music because it's adapted in every country — whether it's the Arabic, the Andalucian in Spain or the Hungarian but it's still distinctive — a lot of Indian ornamentation, incredible natural gifted improvisation and the lyrics.

It was a difficult subject to do logically — filming in nine different countries. Again, every country doesn't want you to film their gypsies — the last thing they ever want! In Yugoslavia we were hounded — arrested time and time again just for pointing a camera at gypsies. All over eastern Europe



Gypsy juggler called 'Nakrazan, in a backstreet of Old Cairo, Egypt.

continued ▽

they just look on them as scum. In Hungary they're given a much better deal than some places. The Hungarians are quite sympathetic in some respects but even there they're kind of guest workers in their own country because they have special trains they travel on and special workers' hostels where they have to stay and they do manual labouring for about £4.00 a week. It reminded me of South Africa. It's the same story all over again — it really is a kind of Third World within the West. Maybe because of that they've preserved this incredible living folk culture which is so important to them because through it they say everything. They don't write. They've got no public voice. They've got no access to the media at all and so it's there in the songs.

JM: Unfortunately, you never really get what you hope to get — the practical problems, the restrictions in what you can do with a film camera. As soon as you turn up with a camera you walk into so many problems. All the films were a compromise. It's just a question of getting the very best out of it with the help of the people you're filming and always working with them rather than just recording them on film and taking it away. That's probably the biggest difference between what we do and what many other people do in making films. . . . trying to work with musicians and what they want to say and yet present it in a way that's acceptable cinematically to the audience you're showing it to. ■

The Fourth Channel (once it gets started) will be showing the first seven of Jeremy Marre's films as a series. They have also agreed to a further seven, subjects detailed below:

1. Country Music in the Appalachians
2. Texas Mexican border music
3. Music of the Andes
4. Japanese popular music
5. Popular music of Thailand
6. Popular music of China
7. Indian popular music (from film to tribal music)



# Revolutions and Mister Dolly Parton

*a vortex of androgyny — John Oswald*



A 12-inch record by the YoYos seems to be entirely compatible at either 33 1/3 or 45 rpm as all the elements seem unrealistic in each speed. The name of the ensemble leads me to suspect that this was intentional or at least realised in post-production because there is no indication on the sleeve or the labels as to what is the official setting. Four of the six tracks are instrumentals that, especially in the case of 'In&Out' and 'Whooper Dooper', sound like either C&W tinged disco or a danceable heavy metal type of bluegrass, depending on the speed chosen. The timbre of the instruments is confounded by tape echo and other dub effects on the drums and guitar, plus an oddly tuned electronic keyboard and saxophone parts played through an octave divider. But the vocal numbers are the most intriguing. Bunny, the singer, is a stocky young black man (the one holding the microphone in the jacket photo) which gives no aid in determining whether his voice tends towards the baritone or falsetto and whether, in the indescribably familiar sounding 'Bunny Loves Him', the lyrics of which make no reference to the title, he is slightly drunk and/or

contemplative or is trying to rouse us with an uptempo paean concerning the profligacy of humankind.

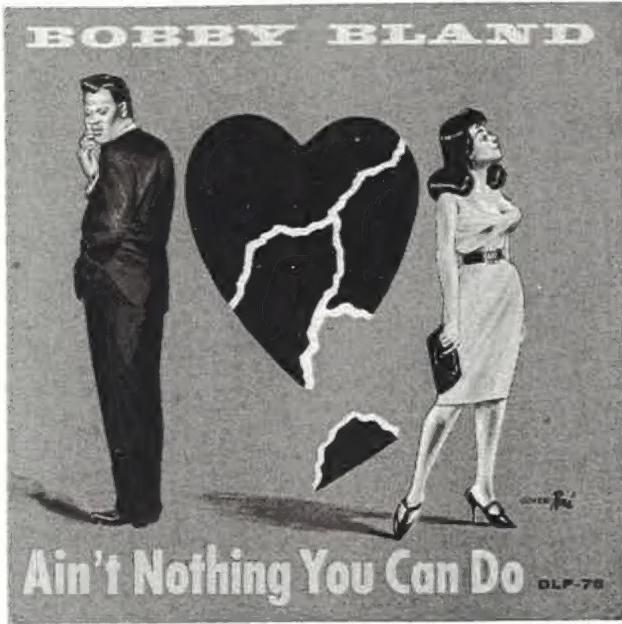
The permutable of Bunny's smooth voice is similar to Ray Charles' sound whose singing on LP when jacked up to 45 rpm sounds a lot like Smokey Robinson's; most effectively in the lovely 'It's Cold Outside' where he sings counterpoint to Betty Carter's impersonation of Minnie Mouse. And conversely, several people have told me that they play their copies of Dolly Parton's single 'Jolene' at 33 1/3 rpm at which speed she becomes a slightly slurring but beautiful tenor. The effect is a vortex of androgyny when one flips from one turntable speed to the other with each verse: the accelerations follow the swoops of the solo violin and Dolly proceeds to sing a duet with himself.

Tempo adjustments of records are common in discos, and charts of beats per minute are published to facilitate the fitting of a number into the groove of its predecessor. The most amazing example of this is the 'Stars on Long Play' disc which features perfect impersonations of 29 Beatle songs in 13 minutes and

10 seconds, all in exactly the same tempo. At parties a timely change of speed of the prevailing music can help avoid rejection or challenge the prevailing step.

Grandmaster Flash doesn't need a servo-synch motor. His fingers can find the tempo that's right in the groove. On record he plays records combining simultaneously otherwise unrelated tracks. He'll pan back and forth over one drum shot to produce the beat or he'll vary the speed of the passes to follow a melody. His music is indigenous to the medium.

The Lenco with a speed control which is infinitely variable between 16 and 78 rpm's, is the greatest of turntables. I can't help but race through the possibilities of any particular disc, accelerating and gliding through various twists and turns, hurrying past redundancy and slowing into a particularly tricky passage. Anyone can play as fast as Charlie Parker; the most unforgettable insipid of easy listening arrangements is elegiac at half speed. Most of the orchestral repertoire is quite legible and economic at six times the speed it was cut, where the strings sound like a *Casio Tone*. ■



# PARANOID SEX in '60s SOUL

by Nick Kimberley

## Mid-Sixties Misogyny: The Sins of Solomon



... female discourse is suppressed but remains in the form of threatening shadows and man-killing Amazonian women'

— Pam Cook, 'Duplicity in Mildred Pierce' in *Women In Film Noir*.

By now it hardly needs stating that soul owes a stylistic debt to gospel, particularly to that area of gospel best defined by the male quartets of the 50s and 60s: intricate harmonies supporting an emotional lead whose vocal acrobatics might incorporate a slightly blurred sexual identity. To be sure, Julius Cheeks' mighty roar is identifiably male, but what about Sam Cooke and Claude Jeter? Cooke's highly ornamented singing with the Soul Stirrers suggested an almost 'feminine' delicacy (it drove the girls wild, of course), while Jeter's falsetto soared higher than any woman's voice. And then there were the Staple Singers, whose style was basically 'male quartet', but with some of the vocal parts going to females, notably Mavis, who in her mid-teens already had a voice deeper than her dad's.

For all its formal daring, gospel's message was fairly conservative: the strength of the community lies in the church and in the tightly-knit family, with Mother as the figure whose devotion to God made all things possible (the Staples' "If I Could Hear My Mother", the Swan

Silvertones' "Living On Mother's Prayer"). Mother's sacrifices were endless; and in the Mighty Clouds of Joy's "Bright Side", she is literally sacrificed, hanging on the clapper of the church bell to save her eldest son from a charge of murder, a parable which brings out lead singer Joe Ligon's most convincing histrionics. The closed double-world of church and family was a refuge, and Tony Heilbut has gone as far as to suggest, in *The Gospel Sound*, that it could provide a haven for homosexuals whose life, in the 40s and 50s, was otherwise severely restricted. In that context, falsetto males and deep-voiced females have at least a potential sexual resonance: even within the good Christian rigour of gospel, sexual ambiguity leaks out, and Little Richard's sequins and pompadour are only one step outside the church door.

That ambiguity lingered in soul music of course (Ted Taylor, Al Green, Sylvester), but was generally replaced by the traditional male/female roles of white pop music: assertive male (Wilson Pickett's "Don't Fight It") and pleading female (Betty Lavette's "Let Me Down Easy"), although Betty's big voice had its revenge later with "Your Turn To Cry"). But even in the 60s such clear-cut roles were beginning to crack round the edges: and soul music responded with the almost pagan suggestion that romantic love and normal,

'healthy' relationships were out of the question, that involvement could only lead to disaster, and that the only satisfaction was to be had at the expense of one's partner: in short, it would all end in tears. Hardly 'liberated', these unstable sentiments were almost invariably sung by men, and their predicament was caused by unfaithful and predatory Woman.

## SALT IN MY COFFEE

Solomon Burke provides us with not only some of the best soul records but also some of the clearest examples of this edgy state of mind, in telling counterpoint to his bold and arrogant voice. On "You're Good For Me" (a Don Covay song) he concedes that his lover does things for him that no



Solomon Burke

▽

doctor could, but at the same time 'You're a good-for-nothing, girl . . . you do two wrongs for every right, you put salt in my coffee just for spite' — surely such domestic booby-traps put conjugal bliss out of reach? Indeed, Solomon eventually realises that he has to 'call a halt, and on his finest record, "Someone To Love Me", he walks out after describing this woman as a dominatrix who 'taught me so many little things, like going to school'. True, he claims to have found himself a new girlfriend, but in underlining the guilt of his old flame, he implies that his new love won't be much different, and he'll be lucky to escape unscathed. The only slightly less splendid "Goodbye Baby (Baby Goodbye)" is even more pointed; here the aim is nothing less than revenge and complete humiliation. After indulging in a spot of anal-oralism ('you made me lonely, you made me hurt/like a fool I gave you candy, you fed me dirt'), Burke goes on to outline the progressive stages of humiliation as he goes on his way: 'I'm coming to your party, and I won't be going to stay, and I'm gonna kiss you one more time' and then 'I'm gonna touch you' ('touch' pronounced with venomous contempt) before the final coup de grace: 'I'm gonna dance with you one more time' — all three harmless acts transformed into acts of vengeance; bearing in mind Solomon's portly bearing, it's easy to imagine that dancing with the man might not be all beer and skittles.

True to form, it all goes wrong again, as "The Price" tells us. Here things have gone so far wrong that Solomon's stable position within the fabric of the nuclear family is threatened by this Scarlet Woman who 'laughed and called me your personal clown'. Solomon gives us a quick resume of their previous vinyl encounters: 'After I hung up my heart for you and said if you ever need me, all you had to do is call me; I stood up and told the whole wide world that you were good for me'. Sadly his sacrifices have done him no good: 'you cost me my mother, the love of my father, sister and my brothers too'; adrift, 'I couldn't even go to my friends and relations' and eventually 'I could hear my mother say "Fool, I told you"' — no good looking there for help. But 'I don't care what my mother and my father might say . . . why don't you come back to me?' — even now this wreck of a man hasn't learned his lesson. Masochist that he is, he doesn't even want to escape from the web he's caught in, no matter that he's been cast aside by friends and family.

#### THE SCARLET KISS, THE POWER OF THE CHURCH

A similarly drastic disruption of the happy family occurs in Percy



Percy Sledge/Wilson Pickett drawing by Paul Bradshaw

Sledge's "Take Time To Know Her"; and here Percy's downfall threatens the very power of the Church itself. It seems that everybody tries to warn Percy; how do they all know so much about this woman, or is her evil somehow inscribed in her face, her bearing? 'Momma wanted to see my future bride . . . she looked at us both and then she called me to her side and said "Son, take time to know her"'. Percy, though, is in a hurry and just can't wait to get married; but when the happy couple line up in front of the preacher, he too takes Percy to one side and offers the same advice as Momma. Imagine, this woman is so blatantly evil, even the local vicar can spot it! Needless to say, Percy defiles Church and Family and marries anyway. Only to be brought down to earth when he returns from work a little early one day — to find his wife 'kissing on another man': even 'kissing on' sounds somehow more lascivious, more Scarlet than mere kissing. Forget the bliss of "When A Man Loves A Woman", this is the true Percy Sledge, a simple working man torn to ribbons by a beautiful (presumably) woman; if you want

to be happy for the rest of your life, never make a pretty woman your wife. (There's an interesting, almost incestuous, reversal of Percy's theme on Swamp Dogg's somewhat later "Or Forever Hold Your Peace": here Swamp Dogg is the father whose son brings home his intended bride for parental approval. Dogg recognises her from a place 'where a married man shouldn't be' — a brothel, implied; but he can't warn his son without revealing his own guilt, and in the end has to watch disaster approach while holding his peace at the ceremony.)

And if somehow a man could build a loving relationship out of thin air, the chances are that it was illicit, extra-marital; as James Carr discovered, although forbidden fruit may be sweetest, you'll be driven to 'the dark end of the street', 'living in shadows to hide our wrong' because such happiness outside the marriage vows must have its price; who knows, perhaps it's Percy Sledge's wife James is having an affair with, in which case, watch out! As Carr finds out elsewhere, he has 'sowed love and reaped a heartache' because women just

love 'pouring water on a drowning man' — an image of amniotic submersion, perhaps?

#### A RIVER OF TEARS

Ben E. King's rich, smooth voice is best known for reasonably happy celebrations of romantic love ("Stand By Me", "First Taste Of Love") but when roused, he too could see the bitter side of life; "Seven Letters" is an agonising trip through a week of heartache ('seven letters, seven days, seven long, lonely days'), while "River Of Tears" made it clear just how hopeless things were: 'It seems I just can't win, I've been hurt time and time again/Every time I give my heart, somebody tears it apart/Through the years Lord knows I must have shed a river of tears'. "It's All Over" finds Ben at his most vulnerable, reduced to a quivering wreck at the sight of a 'pretty bird' outside his loved one's window: 'I cried a tear, I must have scared that pretty little thing away'. And Ben is so infected with love's malaise that he can't bear the sight of lovers actually enjoying each other's company: 'when I see two young lovers walking down the street, oh how it kills me when I see their two lips meet'. This record, like Solomon Burke's already mentioned, owes its strength largely to the production by Bert Berns, alias Bert Russell, alias Russell Byrd, whose skilful combination of gospel formulae and quasi-Latin guitar and brass brings out the best in Ben. And as a historical footnote it's interesting that "It's All Over" is co-written by Mike Leander, the British arranger/producer who'd been sent to New York by UK Decca to learn how people like Berns, Garry Sherman and Jerry Ragovoy put their music together. In the 70s Leander applied the lesson to the records he made with Gary Glitter.

#### STOP THE WEDDING!

It's possible to provide an almost endless catalogue of broken men complaining uneasily about heartless women: Bobby Bland ('You said we'd get married in the early spring, I passed a pawnshop today, peeped in and saw my ring/You said you needed the money to pay the rent, but I saw you sitting at the bar spending your last red cent' — "That Did It", and I should think so too); Johnnie Taylor ('I'm so tired, I've had enough, you're calling out his name when we're making love', a fairly conclusive humiliation on "Standing In For Jody" — in fact, the character of Jody (Reilly) is worth investigating, but that's another story); Jimmy Lewis ('Girls From Texas' with its razortoting woman, a man-killing Amazonian indeed). Perhaps the most extreme paranoid was Joe Tex, who spent most of his time suggesting that love was a mine-

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Joe Tex photo courtesy Cliff White



strewn battlefield: "Buying a Book", "The Love You Save", "Hold What You've Got". "I Believe I'm Gonna Make It" took love literally as a battlefield: Joe is a soldier in Vietnam, not at all worried about what Jody is up to back home, because 'when I got your letter, I was in a foxhole on my knees, and your letter brought me such a thrill, I raised up and shot me two more enemy'. So that's what love will make you do, and Joe, the arch-conservative, is quite happy to do Uncle Sam's bidding, as long as Love is on his side.

DON COVAY



BEN E. KING

### JUST A LITTLE OVERCOME

This is a long way from the courtly love which provides an example for most pop, and if it never took over from its sweater counterpart, it was at least lurking throughout soul music, and could even be found in Smokey Robinson's bittersweet romances — after all, "The Love I Saw In You Was Just A Mirage". Of course, there are traces to be found elsewhere, especially in country and western, where Hank Williams' ironic self-pity set an example for boozed cowboys everywhere. But nowhere has the model had such currency as in soul music during its 60s heyday, when the church's ideal of happy and settled love was consistently undermined. In fact, as a final footnote, it's worth pointing out that if the church had any place in these songs, it was as the site of disastrous heartache, as with Percy Sledge and Swamp Dogg above; or more usually, as one jilted lover after another watched their loved one marry the wrong person: the Nightingales' "Just A Little Overcome", Gladys Knight's "It Should Have Been Me", Etta

James' "Stop The Wedding". Joe Tex again provides the most extreme example, "All I Could Do Was Cry (Parts I & II)", where Joe observes that 'for them life has just begun but mine is at an end', while his extended monologue through Part II seems to find the most mundane marriage a sort of exotic and incomprehensible tribal rite.

Love here is generally taken out of any social context, although there are occasional references to how hard a man has to work: Little Johnny Taylor's "Somebody Has To Pay" or Bobby Bland's 'I work six days a



week in the rich folks' yard, and anybody can tell you that kind of work sure is hard' ('That Did It' again). But it's certain that there was a social context which provided such a fertile background for these unsettled and jaundiced perspectives on affairs of the heart. This writer isn't qualified to take the subject beyond the realms of mere anecdote, and perhaps there's no need for any more stringent textual analysis or contextualisation. Perhaps it's enough to note that this lopsided view of life often brought out the best in a fellow. ☺

# EAST WEST

by Hannah Charlton

Hannah Charlton looks at the story behind Bengali group Dishari's entry into the singles market — a collaboration with Robert Wyatt on Rough Trade.

Flipping through a stack of singles released over the summer of 1981, you might just pass a green-turquoise image of grasses with, high at the top, the small pink titles *Robert Wyatt/Grass* and *Dishari/Trade Union*. But this discreet cover disguises a quietly momentous record. Not only is it an unusual combination, but it also pinpoints a number of issues to do with cross-cultural productions, their presentation and understanding.

The first song is an Ivor Cutler composition, 'Grass', arranged and sung by Robert Wyatt with the beautiful tabla playing of Esmael Shek masking the underlying violence of the words. The second is a unique song called 'Trade Union' by an East End Bengali group. Here the words are paramount — if mainly to the Bengali community in this country. Rough Trade, with great open-mindedness and enthusiastic support for Robert Wyatt, released the record but perhaps underestimated the careful thinking involved in presentation, distribution, marketing to make the Bengali song much more than a novelty under Robert's wing.

For the single is a two-sided affair, aimed at two audiences who share little contact — the Bengali community and Rough Trade record buyers. They listen to music in different places, they buy their records in different shops... and yet, here is a curious bridge which may lead to a bit more understanding about different musics and the way they function. We live in a pluralist music culture where many musics are out-of-bounds or deliberately not available to the public at large. An example of the latter is the music of feminist bands who play to women-only audiences. Sometimes these musics may be private in the sense that they have strong significance for a small number of people (early music, improvisation) and mostly they operate outside the confines of the music industry and press.

## STRANGE FRUIT

The story of how this record came about goes back to 1979 when Robert Wyatt attended an AARF (Artists Against Racism and Fascism) event and was struck by Dishari's music. After meeting them he suggested that they record 'Trade Union' on one side of the last in a series of singles he has put out over the last year. This series includes Robert's versions of 'At Last I am Free' and 'Strange Fruit'. 'Stalin Wasn't Stalling' (a '40s acapella number originally recorded by the Golden Gate Quartet) is coupled with Peter Blackman reciting his epic oeuvre of Stalingrad. So, by single number four, the inclusion of 'Trade Union' was not incongruous — preceding material having been so wide-ranging. It was also a great recording opportunity for Dishari.

## COUNTING THE WAVES

Abdus Salique, the spokesman for Dishari, came to this country from East Pakistan in 1970. He had been involved in pre-independence left-wing politics and found it wise to leave. In London's East End he set up a small factory, added a newsagents and became involved in local Trades Council activities, always conscious of the needs of the Bangladeshi community in the area. Gradually he recognised the lack of a group playing Bangladeshi music:

'When I came to this country, I was aware that there were lots of Indian and Pakistani groups but none from Bangladesh, which was now independent. I thought I should do something about it especially when there was a lot of trouble in 1978 in Brick Lane (National Front racist attacks). I don't play enough music to do something very creative but when I spoke with people they all asked me to do something. So I made this group, Dishari Shilpee Gosthi, which is a cultural organisation, with Esmael Shek the tabla player and Kadir Duvez the shahnai player and other musicians. A lot of people asked us to play and represent our

ABDUS SALIQUE. Photo by Mark Rusher.

country; we performed at many multi-cultural events, at a benefit at the Royal Albert Hall, on the TV programmes *Skin* and *Nationwide*, and at the Blair Peach memorial concert. Dan Jones, the secretary of the Trades Council, has been very helpful and I began to develop interest in Trade Union activities. Out of that I wrote the song to encourage my people to join the unions.'

'Trade Union' is certainly to the point — a mixture of folk song images and a blunt Eisler directness. Salique's translation of the song goes as follows:

We came from a distant land / Counting the waves / of thirteen rivers and seven seas / With hopes of a better life. / We are the workers! / We labour in the factories and the workshops. / If we unite / We can grasp our rights in our hands. / Of course we must unite / If we want to defeat the racists / If we want to draw the teeth / Of those who suck our blood and exploit us. / We must stand together / Under the trade union banner.

With its rhapsodic opening, the keening shahnai, the changes in rhythm and tone, the song is quite formal in its ballad-like





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structure and musically is rooted in the Bengali folk music tradition. Its message is neither the personal sentimentality of Victor Jara nor the pulpit thumping of the anti junta music of Theodorakis. It's more in the vein of Joe Hill, Phil Ochs or Pete Seeger. It has an immediacy and a potent significance for the first and second generation Bangladeshis who lived through the racist attacks of the late '70s, who struggle to survive in the declining rag trade and who have nurtured the stirrings of a fight-back consciousness.

#### A LONER IN ASIAN MUSIC

An integral part of the story of Dishari is the experience of Abdus Salique himself. In 1979 he was

faced with a deportation order for illegal immigration. The resistance to that order was massive and petitions from the Bangladeshi community and intervention from the M.P. Peter Shore and others meant a strong case for Salique. Here Rough Trade re-enters, because a vital argument for Salique's case was that he was due to make a record here and was therefore required in England. This helped to clinch it and the order was reversed. Salique intends to continue his political songs, hoping that an album can follow.

In many respects, 'Trade Union' stands out as something of a loner in the context of Asian music in general and Bengali music in particular. It is unlikely that Dishari would have been offered a

recording contract by one of the big Asian labels involved in the thriving area of Asian film and pop music. Bangladesh is a younger, poorer nation and does not figure strongly and their music concerns itself with the relatively small Bangladeshi community in Britain.

Bengali music (the general cultural region of which Bangladesh is a part) has strong classical and folk traditions, with many songs derived from the poems of Rabindranath Tagore and folk songs in a pop style. But Salique stressed that his song was unique in that it dealt specifically with the problems faced by the Bangladeshi people here in Britain while the protest folk songs 'at home' revolved around harsher Third

World circumstances. Musical influences here mean that Salique, an avid *Top of the Pops* watcher, wants to make music relevant for the young Bangladeshis growing up here.

'I want to write and sing political songs based on the traditional folk songs but also to mix the traditional with new things. We live in Britain now and young people hear very different music around them. The Asian culture is very rich — we can create something new out of that, maybe using western instruments and styles.'

# Surfin' «Death Valley» USA

david  
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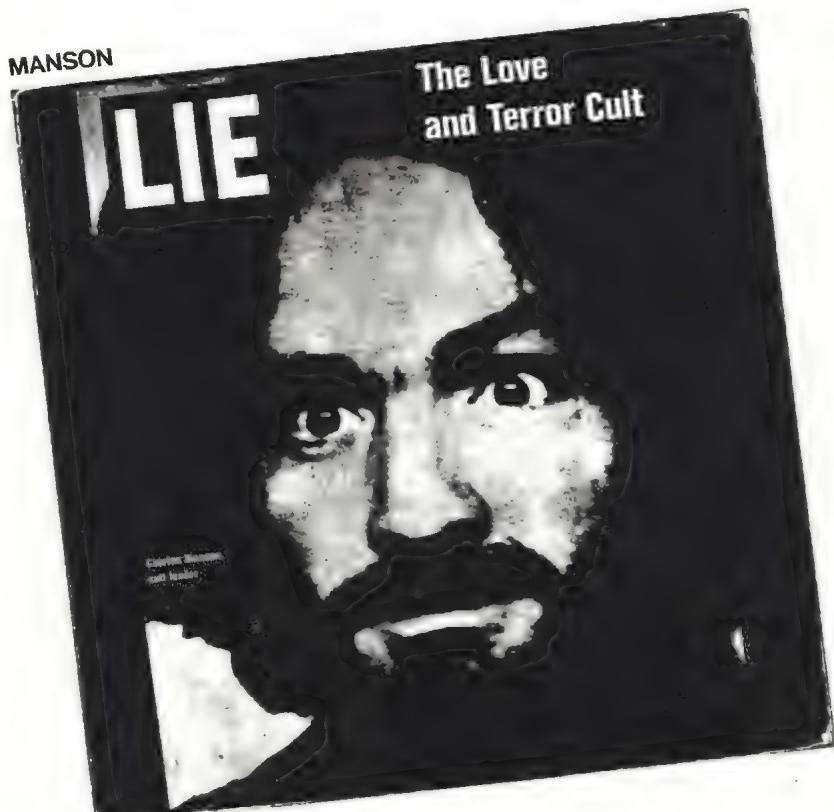
What were the connections between Beach Boy Dennis Wilson, mass murderer Charles Manson and occult film-maker Kenneth Anger? David Toop investigates California Babylon.

When the Beach Boys released their 1969 album *20/20* the biggest thrill for true fans was the inclusion of *Smile* era Brian Wilson/Van Dyke Parks song 'Cabinessence', remarkable for signs it gave that Parks was the writer capable of focussing the mythical Americana that the group had embodied from their first single into something more substantial than teenage love, sports and identity crises. Tagged onto the end of Beach Boys product it didn't make a lot of sense but the feeling persists that in the context of the legendary *Smile* it would have clicked perfectly.

It was the last track so unless you skip the stylus you encounter other aspects of Beach Boy/California preoccupations — the Ronettes/Phil Spector sound of 'I Can Hear Music', the Four Freshmen vocal blend of 'Our Prayer' (another *Smile* song) and a curious love song with a half-finished feel to it called 'Never Learn Not to Love'. This latter had been released the previous year as the B-side of 'Bluebirds Over the Mountain' with writer credits going to Dennis Wilson — drummer, surfer and symbol of West Coast sunshine simplicity. Despite the disquieting intro to the song — silence into horror movie creepy-crawlies — and the startling first line 'Cease to resist...' the song resolves into a two-tier regular patriarchal plea. On one level it cajoles 'give up your ego and let's fuck' and beneath that 'give up your world and join mine for the sake of true love' — the lyrics being sufficiently vague as to dilute these basic messages. The real origins of the song are interesting insofar as they betray not only the logical extension of this rather despicable philosophy but also show the eclipse side of California culture.



"WE'LL GET THE ROUGHEST AND THE TOUGHEST INITIATION WE CAN FIND"  
from "Our Car Club" (Brian Wilson/Mike Love) Beach Boys, 1963



## SUNSET BOULEVARD

The actual writer of the song — author and composer — was Charles Manson. Dennis first met Manson in 1968. The story goes that in a state of recent divorce he picked up two girls hitchhiking in Malibu. The second time he came across them he took them back to his Sunset Boulevard home (shades of Gloria Swanson) and went on to a recording session. Returning at three A.M. he was confronted by a stranger — Manson — who responded to Wilson's fear by kissing his feet. On entering his home — courtesy of Manson — he found himself host to nearly a dozen guests (unknown to him and later known to the world as *The Family*). This little party outstayed its welcome to the extent of doubling its number over a period of months, wrecking Dennis's uninsured Mercedes-Benz, using his Rolls Royce for supermarket 'garbage runs', dumping him with the 'largest gonorrhea bill in history' and finally driving him out of his own home — formerly owned by Will Rogers — to live in one room at Gregg Jakobson's house.

Jakobson, a talent scout married to Lou (of *Abbott and Costello*) Costello's daughter, was impressed with Manson's philosophy and introduced him to Doris Day's son, Terry Melcher, who was living at 10050 Cielo Drive at the time. This address — previously occupied by Candice Bergen, among others — became notorious as the location which first drew Family activities into the full public gaze. This was the scene of the murders which sent out the 'Helter Skelter' shock waves. Many of the network of interconnections, ironies and implications of the story are banal — simply to do with geography, money and show business. Nevertheless, they accumulate to form a distinctly obverse *Moviola*.

These Bel Air murders included Sharon Tate — star of *Rosemary's Baby* (one of the first of the occult movies) and Jay Sebring — a hair stylist who lived in the Benedict Canyon mansion where Jean Harlow's husband Paul Bern committed suicide in 1932 (as immortalised in Kenneth Anger's book *Hollywood Babylon*). Sebring's salon was located on L.A.'s Fairfax — an area namechecked in the Beach Boys' unreleased 'H.E.L.P. is on its Way' — a hymn to the health food restaurant on Fairfax and Third, H.E.L.P., and Brian Wilson's own health food store *The Radiant Radish* (also the only pop song in history to mention enemas).

Melcher and Jakobson were satellites in the Beach Boys world — Van Dyke Parks met Brian Wilson on Terry Melcher's lawn, for example — and inevitably became involved in Charles Manson's musical aspirations. Where the Manson/Family album — released on the ESP label, an independent which specialised in the emergent free jazz of the mid-60s — was recorded and who produced it remains confused. Some material appears to have been cut at Brian Wilson's home studio in Bel Air.

Also, a Santa Monica studio was hired. Dennis Wilson claims that these tapes — 'Just chanting, fucking, sucking, barfing' were destroyed since he felt that 'the vibrations connected with them don't belong on this earth'. There are other stories of film and tape recordings of the Manson Family music but whatever their circumstances the ESP album is a contradictory experience. For much of the record Manson shows a vocal resemblance to James Taylor (odd in the light of Dennis Wilson co-starring with Taylor in the self-destruct car movie *Two-Lane Blacktop* a few years later).

In many ways it's a typical psychedelic record — the arrogance of the singer-songwriter genre interspersed by experimental stabs at formalistic breakdown. The lyrics 'distinguish' it, though. Maybe the clearest exemplar of the Manson philosophy is 'Cease to Exist'. It demands a total capitulation to a higher or focal identity — really just an extension of ceasing to resist except in this case the 'higher entity' was advocating racial supremacy and mass murder.

It has been questioned as to why Dennis Wilson should have become involved in this nightmarish world in the first place. There are suggestions that he felt he had too much money. Harder to understand is his reason for taking over the 'Cease to Exist' song, especially in the light of his hindsight remark that 'Charlie never had a musical bone in his body'.

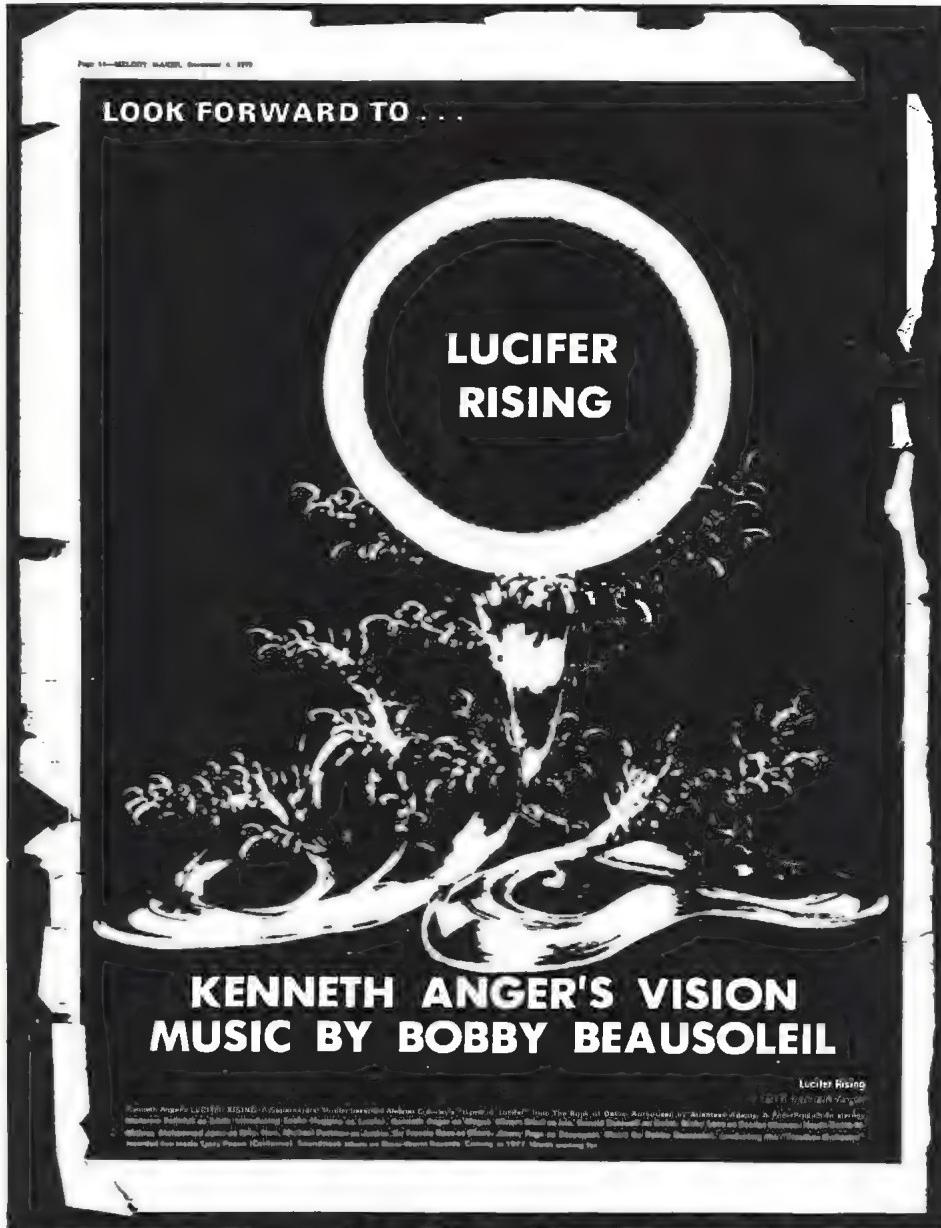
Manson claims he gave the Beach Boys the song to soothe their differences and was furious when he discovered that the words had been changed (justifiably, from his point of view, since the quasi-magical psycho-dominance had been trivialised into boring old everyday sexual manipulation). Dennis is quite clear that Manson sold the song for money and wanted no credit. Nevertheless, it's not much of a song and Dennis was beginning to show himself as possessing some considerable talent as a composer (check his solo album *Pacific Ocean Blue*).

## WHO'S BEEN ROCKING MY DREAMBOAT?

Manson was in fact not the only Family member patronised by Dennis. In 1967 a full page ad. was run in the *Village Voice* stating 'In Memoriam Kenneth Anger 1947-1967'. This was not a death announcement, as might be expected, but a renunciation of film-making after Bobby Beausoleil, the original Lucifer actor in Anger's movie *Lucifer Rising*, had stolen 1600 feet of this picture from a locked trunk and taken it to Manson. At the time Beausoleil had fantasies of being a rock star and had been hanging out with Dennis Wilson in order to improve his chances. Anger's story is that he gave Beausoleil money to buy musical equipment which was spent on grass — this caused the fracas that led to the theft of film footage.

ANGER





Reproduced left one of the series of full-page *Lucifer Rising* ads taken in the music press on the 4th December, 1976. This one was from Melody Maker. Two pages — each one different artwork — were taken in NME!

There are other parallels besides sex-magic and the rise of Lucifer. Hollywood-born Anger's most famous film is probably *Scorpio Rising* — a movie of complex symbolism whose imagery (biker gangs, torture, swastikas — you know the sort of thing) was like a reflection of the Manson world. It was, incidentally, one of the first films to use pop records ('Wipe Out', 'Torture', 'He's a Rebel' — no Beach Boys but close enough!) as soundtrack. Another (unfinished) film, *Kustom Kar Kommandos*, was described by Anger as 'an oneiric vision of a contemporary American (and specifically Californian) teenage phenomenon, the world of the hot-rod and customized car.' The cars were to appear 'an eye-magnet of nacreous color and gleaming curvilinear surfaces' while the customizers would be presented as 'shadowy, mysterious personages (priests or witch-doctors)'. It was as if Anger was filming the transition from the Beach Boys fun-fun-fun of 'Little Deuce Coupe' to the Rommel-inspired Manson attack battalions of customized dune buggies.

Where Anger understood and cinematically portrayed the darker side of the Californian myth (he was to call Manson *Uncle Sugar* — the pilot of the Bad Ship Lollipop in *Hollywood Babylon*) Manson himself was the living embodiment of it. Having helped create the myth, the Beach Boys fell victim to it. For Dennis the Manson persona must have seemed only too tempting. Revealingly, he described the attraction of Manson's music as being its spontaneity. Despite being the staunchest supporter of brother Brian's remarkable *Pet Sounds/Smile/Smiley Smile* writing Dennis must have felt a strong nostalgia for the sparkling simplicity of earlier Beach Boys records. The macho lifestyle, free sex, a philosophy supposedly based on love, male creativity supported by female servitude — irresistible to a macho romantic like Dennis. This was all part of the ideal anyway. Manson raked beneath the skin of white middle-class California and revealed through himself the incipient violence, misogyny, antisemitism and hatred of blacks. Whether this occurred to Dennis later is impossible to say. His comment was 'I'm the luckiest guy in the world, because I got off only losing my money. The sanitization of 'Cease to Exist' into 'Cease to Resist' may have been a means of converting a terrifying glimpse of underlying realities back into socially acceptable human exploitation.

occasion was his struggle for the leadership of the Aryan Brotherhood — a cause not so far from the hearts of either D.W. Griffith or Charles Manson.

## KUSTOM KAR KOMMANDOS

Naturally, there have been comparisons made between Manson's crude but effective psychosexual brain-washing (along with his inferred connections with the California Solar Lodge of the O.T.O.) and Kenneth Anger's self-professed devotion to Aleister Crowley ('I'm engaged in a long-term selling campaign. I have one product that I'm selling: the 20th Century's most misunderstood genius, called Aleister Crowley').

\$10,000 for its

Manson is alleged to have demanded \$10,000 for its return. Anger seems proud of the fact that this was the first example in history of film being held to ransom. He refused to pay. Beausoleil became embroiled in the Family and eventually was convicted of the murder of Gary Hinman. His musical abilities came to fruition on Death Row in Tracy Prison where he recorded a soundtrack for *Lucifer Rising*. Others to have contributed soundtracks include Mick Jagger and Jimmy Page. The current music seems to be D.W. Griffith's organ soundtrack scored for *Birth of a Nation*. Beausoleil claimed that Anger cast a spell on him and changed him into a toad. The other story is that he was so badly beaten up in jail that it disfigured him. Maybe the

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# ENKA

Clive Bell and Kazuko Hohki scrutinise the fascination of impossible love in Enka — a Japanese music in which participation counts for more than consumption.

## ENKA — INSIDE THE JAPANESE HEART

When Yasujiro Ozu, the great Japanese film-maker, died in 1963, he was working on a film called *Radishes and Carrots*. Two of his other films are titled *The Flavour of Green Tea Over Rice*, and *The Taste of Mackerel* (released here as *An Autumn Afternoon*). You never see a mackerel in this film — what all these titles have in common is that they suggest the essence of Japan in a down to earth way. For a Japanese, the taste of grilled mackerel with soy sauce gets right to the heart of what Japan is about, perhaps in a slightly sentimental and nostalgic way. This concept of the heart of Japan is well developed and that's why Ozu's quiet dramas of work and domestic life are valued as the most essentially Japanese films of all.

When it comes to music, *Enka* is right at the heart of Japan — it's quite different from the austere classical music, or the imported part of the enormous popular song culture that has grown in Japan this century, including what is probably the most active amateur singing scene in any industrialized country. The Japanese receive massive exposure to popular song, not only on radio and TV, but in bars, cafes, restaurants, department stores, pinball parlours, almost everywhere you go in the city. There's a midnight radio phone-in programme, playing requests, which is especially popular with high school students studying all night for college entrance exams. So everyone grows up with a sizable repertoire of songs at their fingertips.

## THOSE MISSED CHANCES

So what is Enka? You can define it as a melancholy city ballad, often in a slowish 6/8 rhythm, like cowboys' horses walking on into the night. Typically there's a small orchestra accompaniment, with the tune picked out by a trumpet or saxophone dripping with emotion, sometimes a solo violin or harmonica, leading to the reined-in desperation of the solo voice. If you imagine Elvis Presley singing "Love Me Tender", crossed with Edith Piaf, drinking into the small hours, miserable but stoic, abandonment to nostalgia, those missed chances — then you might get close. At the centre of Enka lies the *Naki*, the cry or the weeping that is always hanging in the voice.



MISORA HIBARI, "Queen of Enka", surrounded by fans and helpers at her recent concert in Tokyo's vast Budokan. In this concert, to celebrate the 35th year of her career, Misora sung 50 songs without a break, a single-handed history of Japanese popular song since the war. Her mainly female audience came from all over the country to hear this "representative of Japanese strong woman".

One of the TV programmes which every Japanese watches is the New Year's "Kohaku Utagassen", or "Red and White Battle of Songs", in which two teams of pro singers battle it out while everyone at home does their end of year spring cleaning. If you are a singer of any standing it is vital to be seen on this show. One year Misora was conspicuously not invited, due to allegations that her brothers were involved in a gangster scandal. She was so offended that next year she conspicuously refused to take part in the programme.

ITSUKI HIROSHI, top Enka singer. Another big excitement at New Year is the announcement of the "Record Taisho" (Big Prize) for the best singer of the year. 1981's top contenders were Itsuki and Sugi. Sugi was particularly desperate to win, having narrowly missed the previous year. But Itsuki was recently widely reported as saying that Sugi should stick to acting, and that his attempt on the prize was an insult to all real singers. This kind of dust-up is the staple diet of several Japanese magazines.

This is very downtown popular culture, the world of bars — there seem to be a million bars in Tokyo, some only big enough for half a dozen customers. You buy a 'Keep Bottle' of whisky and write your name on it. Then the bar keeps it for your next visit. If the bar has comfy chairs it's called a 'snack', and you can eat snacks with the Whisky — for example, raisins in butter served in iced water. I remember one snack where the bar hostess was Chinese, providing female company for



the all-male clientele. I was taken there by a group of 'salary-men' (white collar company employees), and the hostess produced a remote control microphone for them to sing into. In the corner was a guitarist with a rhythm box. Each customer named a song and waded through several passionate verses to the enthusiastic reception of his colleagues.

## SAFETY VALVE

In Japan it's vital to have this sort of party piece — every single person in a bar will sing a whole song and a good Enka singer wins considerable respect. This singing is also an important way for employees to vent their frustration at having worked a very long day in a rather strait-laced and colourless company. They tend to have very little family life, and let themselves go in the bar after work. The Japanese recognise the importance of this safety valve and, unlike the strict English, are extremely tolerant of anything said or done when drinking.

When I asked people about the beginnings of Enka, they embarked on a typically Japanese investigation of the exact meaning of the characters that make up the word, with no conclusive results. Basically, it's safe to say that when Japan had a rural economy, the most popular music was folk (*minyo*) and there still is a very rich folk music and dance culture. But in the last 100 years Japan has passed extremely rapidly from a feudal to an advanced industrial country with great social upheavals, especially the growth of enormous cities. Enka is the music of cities that are still young and people who still remember the mass migration from the countryside. They remember the rootlessness and take a flight into sentimentality.

## KARAOKE BARS

There's a connection with the very old tradition of storytelling with the shamisen (a kind of lute), still seen in the *Bunraku* puppet theatre, and the *Rokyoku* storyteller who hammers his fist on a little desk for emphasis. But Enka is really drinking music, and you can trace a development from the *Nagashi* guitarists who busked their way round bars and houses, to the resident guitarist who accompanies the customers in a bar, to the present-day flowering of *Karaoke Bars* — one of the most distinctive aspects of Japanese music now.

*Kara* means *empty*, and *oke* is an abbreviation of *orchestra* — this is what we call 'Music Minus One', where you have a recording of an orchestra playing a song but no singer. The singer is the customer holding the microphone. Karaoke bars have mushroomed in Japanese cities in the last five years. High quality cassette systems and remote control microphones are readily available, so that your voice is beautifully integrated into the recording and you can be an instant singing star. All over Japan muzak systems are presumably gathering cobwebs in the face of this explosion of DIY musical activity.

This goes on in London too — there's a fine basement Karaoke bar called *Cattleya* just off Cambridge Circus. They have a great stack of song books, with about 250 songs in each book. Both staff and customers sing and drink the night away. Even the English hostesses sing in Japanese.

## ENKA KINGS AND QUEENS

Professional Enka singers are immensely well known in Japan. Among women singers, Misora Hibari and Miyako Harumi are perhaps the best; of the men, most agree Mori Shinichi is the king. When you are singing in a bar a shout of 'Mori Shinichi' from your colleagues is either ironic or a big compliment. Mori, still in his early 30s, has a husky, rather hoarse voice, steeped in smoke and alcohol. He has the characteristic wide vibrato of the Enka singer and an exciting command of the *Kobushi* (= fist) — the heartwrenching technique where the emotional climax of the verse is forced through a very tensed throat.

Along with many other singers, Mori worked until recently for the very powerful Watanabe Productions (delightfully abbreviated to Nabe-Puro). Last year, resenting the heavy cut of his fees that Nabe-Puro pocketed, he decided to go it alone, and advised other professional singers to do the same. Nabe-Puro saw red and used their considerable muscle to get Mori blacklisted on six out of seven TV channels, with the result that Mori's career is going through a sticky patch.

## IMPOSSIBLE LOVE

I've given the lyrics of 'Flower and Butterfly', one of Mori's best songs. Enka often deal with an impossible love, typically between a married man and a bar hostess, which is inevitably sad because they can't marry. This is a well-worn theme, going back to affairs with geisha in 19th century popular songs and literature. But the sadness is mainly for the woman, not the man — the butterfly visits the flower; the flower waits. And the lyrics, as in this example, frequently have the man singing in the woman's role. This morbid fascination with suffering women is fundamental in Japan and this is why many women look askance at Mizoguchi's films about female misery. It's as though a woman can only be deep and beautiful if she's having a terrible time.

And this is the big difference between Enka and *Kayokyoku*, which you can define as light popular song. Enka is always melancholy, but in the world of *Kayokyoku* there are strong family ties, happy love affairs, and a lot of songs about mothers. It's reasonable that Enka should subvert the family, in the same way that drinking every night with colleagues and bar hostesses doesn't leave much family life.

## KARAOKE TAXI

Crazes like Space Invaders and Rubik Cubes come and go very fast in Japan, but Karaoke bars seem to be here to stay, suggesting they appeal to something more deep down. When it's time to leave the bar and you're too drunk to work out the times of the last trains, you can even collapse into a Karaoke Taxi, where the driver will provide you with a microphone and the accompaniment of your choice.

The authors would like to thank Masako Potriakov.

## THE RANGE OF JAPANESE POPULAR MUSIC

### ENKA

Melancholy city ballads, sung especially in bars. Pure Enka can be distinguished from the hybrids like *Kayo-Enka*, *Minyo-Enka*, and *Rhythm-Enka*, which are all more upbeat, and less to do with sobbing into whisky.

### KAYOKYOKU

Lighter popular songs. *Kayokyoku* is also used as a general term for Japanese popular song, as distinct from Japanese classical, Western classical, and Western rock. It would be interesting to trace links between *Kayokyoku* and South-East Asian popular song.

### POPS

Japanese rock, from light to heavy. Includes the female duo Pink Lady, and the Bowie-influenced Sawada Kerji (nicknamed Julie), who made a record recently in London. Some pops show strong Enka influence in singing style.

### FOLK

This doesn't mean the traditional folk music, which is called *Minyo*, but Western-style folk, i.e. singer-songwriters under influence of Dylan, Kristofferson and Carole King, etc. The lyrics are very important, and clearly express what is on the mind of the young generation.

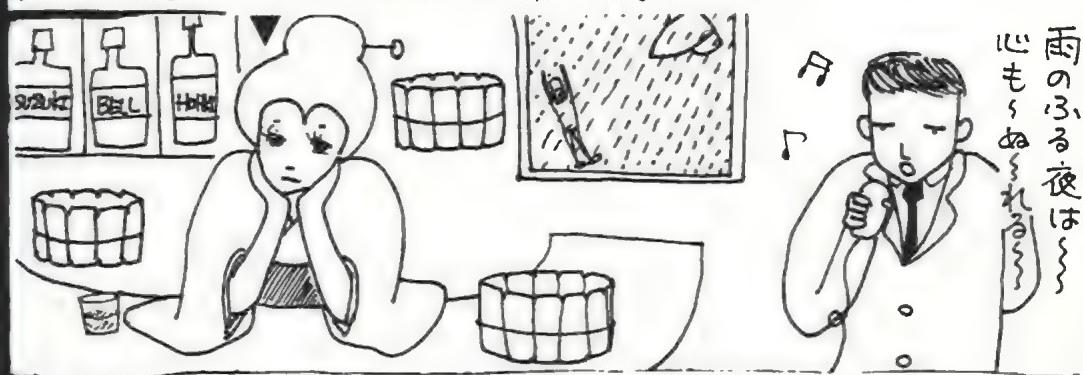
So many sad women in Enka. All those impossible loves and women suffering alone. Personally I think they are stupid. Authorized aesthetic says Japanese women should endure alone and quietly. I hate this. It's an aesthetic for convenience. I make a lot of noise when I'm suffering. Anyway I think it's morally wrong to suffer from a love affair. It's a privileged people's luxury. They should make bombs, instead. Strong women in Japanese porno films don't seem to suffer from that kind of thing. But again this will be a reflection of another authorized aesthetic, i.e. sexy women don't have enough brain to suffer. But still, I like Enka. I love that emotional uplifting. Being sad is one of the easiest ways to feed narcissism. Enka provides good food for that. All those Japanese businessmen who can't have any time to be narcissistic in the office come to Karaoke bar and sing sad songs to be sad. But they have to sing as women, because again authorized aesthetic says Japanese men shouldn't express sad feelings. Also it's nice to imagine there is a woman who is thinking of him but doesn't come near to interfere with his marriage, which is very important for his promotion. (Japanese businessmen have to be married to be promoted. This is supposed to be common sense.)

# ENKA

Here we see inside a Karaoke bar — behind the hostess are "Keep Bottles" of whisky. A customer is singing, "On a rainy night my heart gets wet too". We can also see several empty wooden washing tubs (empty tub =Kara Oke). Outside the window it's raining, and a man is threatened by a rocket.



The bartender tells the hostess "Madam, Ken has come back!" The singers' colleagues are applauding him: "That was marvellous! You are very good!" He modestly replies, "No, I'm not that good!" and a voice from below agrees, "No, you are not that good." Outside the man battles the rocket, and the dog barks: "Wan!"



The delighted hostess calls: "Ken-san!" The singer is bewildered by the unexpected criticism. Outside the man and rocket are now friends, and in the corner we see the legendary strong boy Kintaro, who is famous for sumo wrestling with bears.



"What a pity!" cries the hostess. "Ken-san has become a person from the two-dimensional world!" Meanwhile Kintaro is triumphant: "I beat the bear!" he shouts. The Enka-singer is rather embarrassed ("Iya, iya"), but his friends comfort him ("Ma, ma").



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## CAROL KAYE

by  
**sue steward**

The construction of many a legendary 60s hit involved the imagination of countless unseen session players, who could, and often did, elevate a non-entity into a universal classic. One of the West coast's most prolific studio players of the time was Carol Kaye — first on electric guitar, later on the instrument on which her restricted reputation is built, the electric bass. Carol Kaye's rationale for the frequent anonymity of session musicians is typically uncritical and generous, but clearly aware of the star-creating game: 'The public think the guy behind the glass is great, but most of them don't write music and their stuff would fall on its butt without our stuff.' This is obviously untrue of the Beach Boys, but even they weren't very forthcoming about their use of session players. Carol Kaye put the bass line on most of the surf songs, (including Jan and Dean's) and the Beach Boy's "Pet Sounds" including the distinctive thread to "Good Vibrations". 'People like the Beach Boys didn't want the public to know that most of the players were session musicians.'

Sometimes these backstage conceptualists formed recognisable cliques, associated with particular towns or studios (The Memphis Soul Section, Stax House Band) but most were individuals destined to become, at best, musicians' musicians. Carol Kaye fits exactly into that category; searching for her name on sleeve notes is almost a waste of time. Yet her 60s sessions are a discography of that era — encompassing not only West Coast surf, MOR, and jazz, but also movie soundtracks, TV themes — and over in the tabernacle of pop soul, Detroit, forming the rhythmic basis of many Tamla Motown hit classics. "Back in My Arms" by The Supremes, "If I could build my whole world" by Tammi Terrell and Marvin Gaye, "I was made to love her" by Stevie Wonder, "Feel so Bad" by Ray Charles, plus hits by the Isley Brothers, The Temptations, Sam and Dave. Back on the West side were best-sellers by Mel Torme, Frank Sinatra, Nancy Sinatra, Henry Mancini, Glen Campbell ...

### MOTOWN'S SECRET AFFAIRS

But Carol Kaye never went to Detroit, didn't meet most of the front people of those songs (she once played live in "Little" Stevie Wonder's back-up band). She didn't even know what those sessions were destined for, but they offered her regular employment and cash — an important consideration for a woman with two children and her mother to support.

'In 63/4 we did a lot of Motown "scab" dates — we did them in Steiner's Garage (?) and thought they were demos. They paid us in cash — low-scale — back East they just gave those fellas booze. When we recorded them they had two white chicks as vocalists — even they were brought into LA. Then they'd ship the tapes back East. After one or two years they were coming out as hits! Earl Palmer, the drummer, called me and said "Listen to ..."

[note: Earl Palmer had just arrived in LA from his hometown, New Orleans, and his distinctive drumming was in great demand. Dr John said after his departure: 'They had to use two drummers in his place'.]

'We had wondered why they had used such horrible singers! I listened to the rhythms and recognized the little licks I'd done. So we got the Unions in and we were finally paid Union rates, but they brought in the mafia and then I met Manson, and had my house broken.'

'But I can listen to Motown records now and I can tell which is Jamie (Motown's resident bass player of the time, James Jamerson) and which is me.'

### JUST THERE TO MAKE THE BUCKS

Carol Kaye's reputation began on electric guitar, in the late 50s, when she combined an office day job with night-time club dates. 'Most of the time I was the only white player in the clubs' — not to mention being a small, blonde, blue-eyed woman.

Her regular appearances with



Greg Cobarr

Billy Higgins, Les McCann and Hampton Hawes brought her to the attention of talent hawk (and Little Richard manager) "Bumps" Blackwell, who held open the door to studio session work, initially on guitar, mandolin, banjo, later exclusively on electric bass.

Through the 60s she picked up a massive local reputation — ultimately being the Number One studio bass player in LA — and earning fantastic amounts of money: 'I'd go from the Beach Boys to a Cannonball Adderley album, then onto a Mae West session with Hal Blaine on drums. It gave me a nice variety. I even played with Elvis (67/8) but I

didn't like the phoney scene.'

In a recent letter to *Modern Drummer* she recalled those days with fondness: 'I've worked with Hal Blaine in a lot of studios. We took each tune and/or singer, applied our particular talents to create "hooks" and lines, and made hits for them while raising our kids who are now grown. We were a family together for years — the greatest bunch of people in the world, who made even the worst situation fun to play, and that's what got on those hits of the 60s and 70s.'

The switch from guitar to bass came in '63. She described in *Guitar Player* having picked up a bass after hearing the 'groovy

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patterns' James Jamerson was creating; but told me a slightly different story: 'I started playing bass when the bass player didn't show. They'd got a Fender and I loved it . . . after all that crap I'd been playing on guitar. Of course I had to sit down and learn how to play the thing — it's got its own technique and sound. It's not a guitar nor a stand-up bass like some people think.'

Carol Kaye took the plectrum to the bass, making for a distinctive, plucked sound which achieves the characteristic clarity and purity (listen to "Good Vibrations" again).

From studio work she entered the super-tax bracket via movie soundtracks; Quincy Jones invited her into the score for "The Slender Thread" followed by "The Pawnbroker" and "In the Heat of the Night" and then she moved onto TV themes like Mission Impossible, Streets of San Francisco, Ironsides . . . She reckons she averaged around 3-4 work-calls a day, about 10,000 in that decade, netting around 70-80,000 dollars a year with a typically Hollywood lifestyle to match: 'I was really making the money, had a house with a Roman tub, golf course, everything I wanted. But I was miserable because I didn't have my music. Most of the studio work I did regret, because it took me from what I really wanted to do; I was just there to make the bucks. Most of the music I couldn't stand.'

That frustration with studio work comes through too in comments like: 'We brought some stuff from the jazz field into the studio, but couldn't use it . . . my biggest influence is early jazz, playing funk bass lines comes from jazz riffs. I admire George Benson for still being able to put jazz on top. But a lot of that music now is over-arranged wall-to-wall notes.'

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#### "FEEL SO BAD"

While the 60s were a financial success story for Carol Kaye, the 70s grew increasingly nighmarish, beginning with voluntary retirement from the studio schedules and ending with enforced retirement from playing almost altogether, due to rapidly deteriorating health. When we talked in March 81, Carol was emerging joyfully from a decade of pain and worry, and feeling for the first time in years, optimistic and healthy, and anxious to get moving in new directions *under her own control*. She proceeded to tell me her horrific story: 'I had parasites — roundworms — in my stomach. It took five years to discover what was wrong with me. Many white people get them in America — black people can't. I was crippled up, could hardly walk, and in so much pain always. I read it up in Boulder library — if the doctors had done that I



wouldn't have waited so long. The larvae get into the eye and ear and the brain — I was blind in one eye, went deaf, and had a metal plate in my jaw. I've had a pain in my stomach since I was a little girl (she's now in her 40s) now it's gone! But when I started to get rid of them, I could feel them like a great beast, moving inside me. But everything is coming back now — I can see and hear again, the throat box is settling in the right areas and I can get to sing. I feel like I was when I was 18.'

The story has a real fairy-tale ending: she is about to move to New York to form her own band at last, to tour, record, and perform her own material

#### "UNDERSTANDING"

With such a small reputation based on such a large involvement with the hit records of an era, one niggling question keeps returning: 'How come she is so unknown?' I tried to persuade Carol that, had she been a man, the situation would have been different, and that sexist discrimination renowned in the music biz as a whole, is especially virulent in the studio in the control of fixed gender roles: women were OK as singers, and occasionally on flutes and pianos — that was all. It's still not much different of course. Laughing, she wouldn't play along with that idea: 'It doesn't matter if you're a lady or a goon, as long as you can play.'

Unfortunately, for less tough, capable and confident women players, that has proved untrue. Her obvious pleasure at playing with men prevents her from the detachment necessary to observe the organisation of these microcosms, but she added fuel to my

argument when she told me: 'The music biz knows pretty well who I am, but on the early stuff — Sam and Dave, Ike and Tina — they left my name off but put on most of the men. I've got so many credits it doesn't really matter.' It is clear that for Carol Kaye her creative identity was a problem — not her sex.

Ironically, it is not through her bass playing that Carol Kaye has entered the public consciousness to any degree, but via her definitive series of tutor books: Electric Bass Lines — (published by her own company, Gwyn, named after her daughter). These books and the accompanying double record are also the unlikely link between Carol Kaye and the European avant garde.

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#### THE ARCHITECTS AT WORK ON THE BUILDING

While Carol Kaye's guitar was filling in the West Coast rhythms of many a '50s jazz club group, over in Holland a double bass player with solid Conservatoire grounding, was a regular stand-in for visiting jazz dignitaries, such as Dexter Gordon. 'I was a servant of the great man's style,' recalls Maarten van Regteren Altena, whose playing has strayed far from the rhythmic formulae of those days. He is also a permanent member of the loose association of international improvising musicians known as Company, and a central character in the complex web of European and American musicians, whose explorations of the technical capacity of their instruments as well as the dynamics of group improvisation, have pulled him far from the Conservatoire textbooks.

At first glance, Altena and Carol Kaye make unlikely page-mates, but close attention reveals a pair of devout perfectionists, working on two closely-related instruments — the electric and stand-up bass. An *actual* link is forged through Altena's recent solo album, "Papa Oewa", where the track entitled "Self-Portrait as a Young Bassist" extracts a tiny fragment of a recorded bass lesson from Carol Kaye's double tutor record. This tape-looped motif provides a constant melodic backdrop to Altena's own wild and angular bowing.

Altena admits to being very impressed by Carol Kaye's method of tuition. 'I've liked her since I heard the album; it's the best method of schooling I've heard — logical and clear. I like how she plays in her lessons, in a Satie-like quality, very flat. It serves as a double function — as "music" and as a lesson. I don't think she'd appreciate what I did with her lessons though!'

Apart from the homage paid to Carol Kaye's techniques, Altena also thinks 'she deserves a lot of credit. She made the architectural bass lines for so many songs . . . first the bass line, then the song.'

Carol uses a similar analogy herself, when discussing the bass-drums axis in *Modern Drummer*, July 1981: 'The drummer is like the framework of the house, and the bass player is like the basement.' Elaborating on the subject of rhythm-making she adds: 'A real fine drummer ought to be able to tell a story between his hands and feet — not just bang on the drum. When I watch people dance, the bass is felt in their pelvic area, but the drummer's got the whole body.'



## THREE BOPS AND A BOP by steve beresford

Babs Gonzalez is the one on the left of the picture, explaining a point to Nat Cole. Babs didn't stop at wearing ace suits, he was part of a whole tradition of 'hip' verbosity in the bebop era. Most styles of bebop singing are accessibly documented on Spotlite Records' "Cool Whalin'" album — not just the well-known methods of writing words to previously recorded improvisations (Eddie Jefferson's 1949 version of Charlie Parker's "Parker's Mood") or scat singing an improvisation to a standard (Kenny Hagood's "Bye Bye Blackbird"). There's also an early example of a medley record (not at all like "Hooked on Classics") in Gonzalez's "Cool Whalin'". Starting with the immortal "Shabba-dabba-dabba-dooby-doop-doop", which the band dutifully repeats, Gonzalez then segues into the consecutive first lines of some 13 titles, well-known songs, including "Dinah", "Let's Fall in Love", "Blue Moon", "It Don't Mean a Thing", "Laura" and "Honeysuckle Rose". Each time, the band completes the sentence, (not necessarily correctly).

Babs' other song goes:

Got a pretty Cadillac car  
And he's got a real cool bar.  
He's no fool and he's cool  
Sugar Ray's the champ for me.  
Now he's fighting cancer too  
Looking out for me and you  
He's the King of the Ring,  
Sugar Ray Robinson.

Bebop's varied assaults on established pop songs sometimes took quite subtle forms. There's an old record of Joe Carroll and Dizzy Gillespie doing a *slight* alteration job:

Grabbin' up your hat, coat, boots  
and everything,  
Leave your worries on the door-  
step, cos we're going bye bye,  
Just direct your feet, you'll look  
neat  
To the sunny side of the street

Carroll's contribution to "Cool Whalin'" includes a song advocating total rejection of L-O-V-E, if it means giving up his beloved steak, potatoes, rice, corn, pork chops, chicken . . . an endless shopping list. 'Take a look at me and you can plainly see that I'm a man who loves to eat', he says, although a picture of Carroll with Gillespie in the late '40s shows him to be far from fat.

In 1962, Carroll was in slimline suits, and made an album entitled "Man with a Happy Sound", on which nursery rhymes are transmogrified into R & B numbers, and he appears to sing through a wah-wah trumpet mute on one track — very much in the voice-imitating-instrument tradition.

Back with "Cool Whalin'", the ballads are sung by the gloriously-named Frankie Passions and Kenny "Pancho" Hagood, who is still singing today around Detroit. Hagood crops up on various bop albums, including the Miles Davis tentet airshots, where he sings "Darn Dream". The other uptempo number he does on "Cool Whalin'" is "Oop-bop-a-da" (another genre-nonsense ➤

syllable song) and you can find a longer and crazier version sung by Gillespie and altoist John Brown on the "Good Bait" album, where they do a bit of whistling as well.

### THE TRILLY TUNE-TOSSERS

Billy Eckstine was a great influence on Hagood and lots of other deep-toned ballad singers, and his m.c./compere "The Stomach that Walks Like a Man", was Ernie "Bubbles" Whitman:

'Yessirree, send me that ballad from Dallas, I'm floating on a swoonbeam. And now to keep the downbeat bouncing right along, here's a zootfull snootfull called "Mr Chips", as it is fleeced and released by Billy Eckstine and his trilly tune-tossers. Toss it, Billy, toss it!'

Photography courtesy of Spotlite Records,  
photographers unknown.

Thanks to Matthew at Colter's Bookshop  
and Tony Williams at Spotlite.



Babs Gonzalez

Whitman's hipster announcements clearly related to the singers of that era, but also to the tradition of fast-patter salespeople and showbiz m.c.'s generally. He predated the superfast dj's of the 60s, like B. Mitchell Reed, as well as the 80s rap style. He seems to have been fluent in the language of Vout — a language devised by guitarist/vocalist/pianist/comedian Slim Gaillard (who deserves a whole article).

As the m.c. said, the Eckstine Band was "the grooviest mess of talent that ever kicked a hole in the bottom of a gut bucket," and the 1949 airshots on "Together" featured vocalist Eckstine, Lena Horne and Sarah Vaughan.

### THE LAND OF OOH BLA DEE

Further investigations into sung bop will unearth Prestige's "The BeBop Singers", which includes Annie Ross' great song "Twisted", later mangled by Joni Mitchell:

"I heard little children were  
supposed to sleep tight,  
That's why I drank a fifth of  
vodka one night"

There is also more material by the brash Carroll and quieter Jefferson.

Savoy's double album "The Bebop Boys" has a side of Hagood, Gonzalez and Jefferson. Jefferson's great affection for James Moody's playing is beautifully expressed in the conversational "Birdland Story" — a setting of a Moody solo to a blues:

I got a cab and went straight down to Birdland  
The first one that I met was Charlie  
He was standing at the bar with Diz  
Having a little taste, they had time to waste  
The rhythm section hadn't come in . . .  
Moody went and picked up his horn, and nobody made a sound  
It was a Saturday night I'll never forget.

So, like Bubbles says:

Just walk down a short flight,  
bang on a front door, flash your  
I-D, push the smoke out of the  
way and latch on to a ringside  
table! — or at least check out  
some of these records.

### Discography

- "Cool Whalin'" Spotlite SPJ 135
- The Bebop Singers Prestige (US) PR 7828
- The Bebop Boys Savoy (US) 2225
- Good Bait — Dizzy Gillespie Orchestra Spotlite SPJ 122
- Pre-Birth of the Cool — Miles Davis Orchestra Jazz Live (Italy) BLJ 8003
- Together — Billy Eckstine Orchestra Spotlite 100
- Man with a Happy Sound — Joe Carroll Egmont AJS 13

A  
ORIGINAL MOTION PICTURE SCORE  
CRY OF THE BANSHEE  
AND FROM THE ORIGINAL TELEVISION SCORE THE  
EDGAR ALLEN POE SUITE

# ONE STEP BEYOND

CAPITOL FULL DIMENSIONAL STEREO

Les Baxter's  
*Jewels of the Sea*



It's an interesting paradox that some of those same composers who were helping to scare the pants off the younger moviegoer in the American '50s and '60s were also sedating the socks off their parents. For the trained professional who wrote and arranged as a job there was work available in the easy-listening market and in production-line genre composing for TV series and low-budget film. Leith Stevens, for example, wrote for TV (*Lost in Space*), George Pal sci-fi movies (*War of the Worlds*, *When Worlds Collide*), and teenage classics (*The Wild One*).

Les Baxter, born in Texas in 1922, covered a similar territory. A member of Mel Torme's Mel Tones in the mid-1940s, he was also musical director for the Abbott and Costello and Bob Hope radio shows and arranged for Nat Cole. In the '50s he was signed by Capitol and produced a series of albums with exotic themes — *Ritual of the Savage*, *Tamboo*, *The Sacred Idol* — along with easy listening hits. The latter — songs like "Lonely Wine" and "I Love Paris" — occasionally showed flashes of interesting orchestration but were largely in the Ray Conniff/Lawrence Welk style — bland and infuriatingly smug. The exotic records were a different matter. Our century's obsession with exotica was well established by the '20s: Picasso and the Surrealists had made it fashionable for painters and sculptors, narrative films set in exotic backgrounds (documentaire romance) were extremely popular between the two World Wars and the first Tarzan movie was made in 1918. In the classical music tradition Debussy had transformed what he had heard of those now famous Javanese musicians at the Paris exhibition of 1889 into a sound whose attraction later proved irresistible to M.O.R. arrangers and soundtrack writers. In America Henry Eichheim and Dane Rudhyar were forerunners to a group of West Coast composers — Henry Cowell, Harry Partch, Alan Hovhaness, Lou Harrison, Colin McPhee, John Cage — who studied exotic musics and attempted to establish the idea of a World Music.

Making good use of his eclecticism and unusual orchestration ideas, Les Baxter distilled these trends into familiar stereotypes — Paradise and the Savage. The music ranged from tame mambos (with cover art exploitation of the African cult origins of the rhythms) to rich Frippertonics-like tone poems. Album liner notes emphasised the pictorial aspects and titillated listeners with the promise of "flowing beauty, liquid depths of romance, enchantment and mystery".

The logical collaboration for Baxter was with supposed Incan princess Yma Sumac, whose four-octave voice was said to "soar into the acoustic stratosphere". Scurrilous rumours exist that Yma's real name was Amy Camus and her true origins lay in Brooklyn, but Baxter took her name at face value and orchestrated accordingly. *The Voice of Xtabay* was not only a huge hit but a masterpiece of kitsch exotica.

Unsurprisingly, Baxter's first film score was for a sailboat travologue — *Tanga Tika* — in 1953. This was followed by Westerns and from 1957 on into the '70s a mixture of horror, sci-fi and teen flicks. The public who had wanted enchantment and the mild threat of paradise were getting edgy. Paradise was now occupied by the *Creature from the Black Lagoon* and in every wilderness there was the chance of encountering some lumbering lost creature like Howard Hawks' *The Thing*. The king of genre pictures was, of course, Roger Corman and it was for Corman that Baxter produced the bulk of his output. Corman had no interest in the music. As he produced a film Baxter would score while Corman moved onto the next. Out of this breathless conveyor belt came a barrage of camp horror, preposterous sci-fi, surf and biker trash — the worst of it still only marginally less interesting than the best. Possibly the most enduring are the Edgar Allan Poe stories with Vincent Price. Les Baxter provided scores for *The House of Usher*, *The Pit and the Pendulum* and *The Raven*.

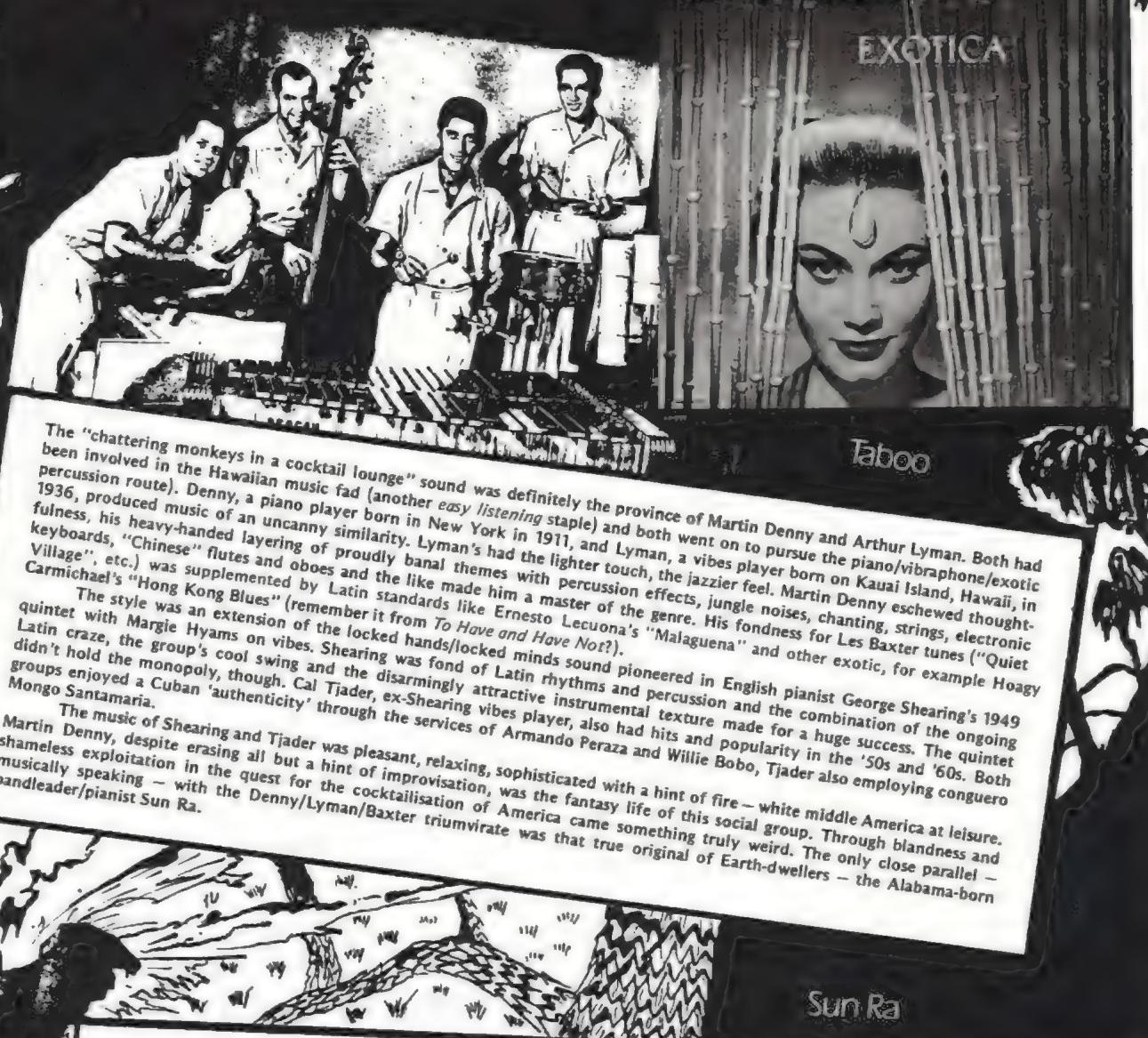
For composers, like Baxter, with a penchant for experimentalism, film and TV work was ideal since it allowed them to get weird without getting broke. While Pierre Schaeffer was adding his Musique Concrete to arty kitsch exotique like "Masquerage", other more venal souls were preparing to wade in among the dollars to add to our stock of sound/vision cliches with the new electronics, so-called atonalism and all the rest.

Many of their efforts were very light in feel but the Edgar Allan Poe adaptations and TV series like *Outer Limits*, *One Step Beyond*, Rod Serling's *Twilight Zone* and *Night Gallery* (scored by composers like Dominic Frontiere and Harry Lubin) all contributed to a sub-genre of cloying, almost oppressive creepiness.

Les Baxter continued with horror into the 1970s with H. P. Lovecraft adaptations and creature-invasion flick *Frogs* (using tape-manipulated frog sounds for the latter) pausing for light relief in the beach and bikini genre of the surf era (*Muscle Beach Party* featuring Dick Dale and the Del Tones). These days he still writes exotic music for contemporary manifestations of the vicarious urge — theme parks and seaworlds.

Research and design by David T. Thanks to Fred Nilsen and K. Laffey of the Los Angeles Music Society for the introduction to the music of Les Baxter, Mac Denny and Arthur Lyman. For their help in the past on Sun Ra research thanks to Victor Schonfield, Jim Docherty and Julien Vein.

## EXOTICA



The "chattering monkeys in a cocktail lounge" sound was definitely the province of Martin Denny and Arthur Lyman. Both had been involved in the Hawaiian music fad (another easy listening staple) and both went on to pursue the piano/vibraphone/exotic percussion route. Denny, a piano player born in New York in 1911, and Lyman, a vibes player born on Kauai Island, Hawaii, in 1936, produced music of an uncanny similarity. Lyman's had the lighter touch, the jazzier feel. Martin Denny eschewed thoughtfulness, his heavy-handed layering of proudly banal themes with percussion effects, jungle noises, chanting, strings, electronic keyboards, "Chinese" flutes and oboes and the like made him a master of the genre. His fondness for Les Baxter tunes ("Quiet Village", etc.) was supplemented by Latin standards like Ernesto Lecuona's "Malaguena" and other exotic, for example Hoagy Carmichael's "Hong Kong Blues" (remember it from *To Have and Have Not?*).

The style was an extension of the locked hands/locked minds sound pioneered in English pianist George Shearing's 1949 quintet with Margie Hyams on vibes. Shearing was fond of Latin rhythms and percussion and the combination of the ongoing Latin craze, the group's cool swing and the disarmingly attractive instrumental texture made for a huge success. The quintet didn't hold the monopoly, though. Cal Tjader, ex-Shearing vibes player, also had hits and popularity in the '50s and '60s. Both groups enjoyed a Cuban 'authenticity' through the services of Armando Peraza and Willie Bobo, Tjader also employing conguero Mongo Santamaria.

The music of Shearing and Tjader was pleasant, relaxing, sophisticated with a hint of fire — white middle America at leisure. Martin Denny, despite erasing all but a hint of improvisation, was the fantasy life of this social group. Through blandness and shameless exploitation in the quest for the cocktailisation of America came something truly weird. The only close parallel — musically speaking — with the Denny/Lyman/Baxter triumvirate was that true original of Earth-dwellers — the Alabama-born bandleader/pianist Sun Ra.

## Sun Ra

One of the few records Sun Ra has made outside of his own Arkestras is an early '60s piano/vibes collaboration with Walt Dickerson. Entitled *Impressions of Patch of Blue* the album owes its atmosphere as much to cinema and TV as to jazz. However wacky he may seem, in retrospect Sun Ra has always been in tune with the fashions of American culture.

It might be an unlikely comparison — Sun Ra, a black bandleader, composer, keyboard innovator, eccentric, poet, patriarch, Egyptologist, spacemaster general — held alongside the white soundtrack and muzak industry. Nevertheless, right from the first of his albums under his own name, he has been making short experimental tracks with a distinct Hollywood feel and an exotic/futurist content. With the exception of four very integrated albums of the mid-1960s (*Cosmic Tones for Mental Therapy*, *Magic City*, *Heliocentric Worlds*, Vols. 1 and 2) Sun Ra's recorded output has either presented one single aspect of his activity per album (*Strange Strings*, *My Brother the Wind*) or has been programmed in the manner of his live shows, jumping from big band swing to electronics, free blowing din, songs, blues, dirges, lollipping funk, jazz exotica and the aforementioned experimental pieces. Where his philosophy might be seamless (often made so by outrageous and disarming word-play) his musical practice has tended towards inspired juxtaposition rather than intellectual rigour.

Often, the most conventional pieces gain an aura of experimentalism by virtue of their titles, their unusual instrumentation or the disruption of the kit drummer's swing by Sun Ra's piano and the massed percussionists. The "futurist" pieces of the '50s and early '60s tended to mix heavily echoed, percussion and the electric Ondes Martenot wordless vocals and the like — sketchbook tone-poems for hip musicians. In this respect they are rougher than Les Baxter or Martin Denny efforts in this direction. The urgent ostinato of "Music from the World Tomorrow" (*Angels and Demons at Play*, 1956/7) gets a bit fevered for easy listening. There's also the sense of concentrated attention, you can almost picture pleasured indulgence in new sounds on tracks like "Solar Symbols" (*Secrets of the Sun*, 1961/2) or "Cluster of Galaxies" and "Solar Drums" (*Art Forms of Dimensions Tomorrow*, 1962).

Exotic futurism has tended to bring out the ridiculous along with the sublime in those tempted to tackle the genre. Identical devices crop up in musics of the loftiest to the lowliest intent: musical "racial stereotypes" recycled from cinema's caricaturing of exotic music into instantly recognisable signs (Chinese music, American Indian, etc), heavy echo, reverb and electronic glissandi (a la Theremin), vocal/instrumental imitation of jungle animals, legato melodies and shimmering percussion for underwater scenes. In this sense there is a 20th century instrumental tradition which embraces "serious" European composers like Messiaen (writing for colourful instrumentation, percussion and the electrons Ondes Martenot from the '30s); pop instrumentals (Johnny "Guitar" Watson recorded "Space Guitar" back in 1954 followed by numerous other effects-laden travel epics — The Vigilantes "Man in Space"; The Tornadoes "Telstar", "Jungle Fever" and "All the Stars in the Sky"; The Ventures "One Step Beyond" and "Twilight Zone"), film and TV composing; easy listening music and so on. Though Sun Ra's talents go far beyond the limit of any particular genre he holds a revered place within this tradition.

Lost in Space... Stranded in the Jungle...

Search and design by David Toop.  
Thanks to Fred Nilsen and Kevin  
Fey of the Los Angeles Free  
Music Society for the introduction  
to the music of Les Baxter, Martin  
Denny and Arthur Lyman. For their  
work in the past on Sun Ra research  
thanks to Victor Schonfeld, Jacky  
Cherry and Julien Vein.

► DT: You (1) – is it  
GB: By and start work on 1980. I of 1977, be biogr time we finding doing manuscripts spent a people we did that is that, in time, the by now, time and It's getting published wider pr want to Also, I'd definitive for exa probably There ar of autob lifetime I have w there's writings ent news on. The which which are quite a l writings would sa about six book. Gi



# MARVELLOUS APHORISMS!

## GAVIN BRYARS interviewed

Gavin Bryars is an English experimental composer. A conventional biography (abbreviated): born 1943, Yorkshire; studied philosophy, musical composition, double bass; freelance double bass player working in cabaret with Kathy Kirby, Dickie Valentine, David Whitfield, etc. Played jazz with Derek Bailey, Tony Oxley and Lee Konitz; founder member of the Portsmouth Sinfonia; performed widely with his own ensemble, with John White and Dave Smith and with the Steve Reich Ensemble; etc.etc.

One of his best known

pieces, "The Sinking of the Titanic", (one version of which was released on Obscure Records in 1975) is a

good example both of his writing method and the characteristic sound of many of his compositions. His pieces are not only structured according to an aesthetic sense but also by means of relating musical material to extra-musical sources. These sources range from extensive research work (as with "The Sinking of the Titanic") to wordplay, anecdotes, dreams, literary references or allusions to Bryars' enthusiasms of the time. The latter have been

known to include Erik Satie, Lord Berners, Marcel Duchamp, football, Barry Ryan, Sherlock Holmes, detective fiction, Raymond Roussel, Busoni, Scott la Faro and Patience Strong.

The pieces therefore exist on two levels – what the audience hears, which tends to be texturally lush, relatively static and with more than a hint of sentimentality – and what Bryars has buried beneath the musical surface. While it's quite possible to enjoy the music without being aware of any of this it is also fascinating to delve deeper into its construction.

Bryars himself says: "I'd be very surprised if anyone went to the amount of trouble I went to in writing the pieces, and didn't write a piece themselves. It seems to me to be very silly to do as much work as the composer, and then leave the composer intact."

In September, 1981, shortly after the release of his new album and prior to an English tour with fellow composer John White, Gavin Bryars talked to Steve Beresford and David Toop about his biography of Lord Berners, his new record and his forthcoming collaboration with American writer/director Robert Wilson.

for him, helping him with orchestration.

DT: What about his life? Did you find yourself feeling out of sympathy with aspects of it?

GB: I'm not going to like everything he did or like all his friends. But given Berners and I were born under very different circumstances, I find his life very interesting, and most admirable. Being financially independent it meant that he never had to test himself that much. He could drift through life in a listless way if he wanted. But, in a sense, that makes the fact that he did spend time writing music all the more admirable. There was no career inducement to do that — he didn't need to write music. He didn't need to work. But psychologically he felt he wanted to. In that sense I find that more interesting than someone who has to write, say, film music for a living, and turns out a lot of work. As a dilettante Berners could produce the work because that was what he wanted to do. I'm very ambivalent about it — I can admire that on the one hand and despise it on another. I have to keep a certain distance from it.



## THE GREAT DETECTIVE

DT: There's this thing in the sleeve notes of your new record — it's very badly printed . . . "taking place on the day that I came across a copy of the vocal score among Lord Berners' papers."

GB: That's the vocal score of Busoni's *Doctor Faust*. That was the same day that *Doctor Faust* was being done at the Festival Hall. I found several cases of music which Berners had owned.

SB: It's very exciting — finding cases full of things.

GB: Yes. This stuff is all pencil manuscript of preparatory sketches. Even just little things like going through music which belonged to him starts to become interesting when you find the names of the shops which sold it. One of the reasons he retained that *Doctor Faust* score is that he was working on a *Faust* project himself with Gertrude Stein at one time. It didn't come to fruition. He was checking different *Faust* approaches in different composers. He has a number of different versions among his papers. You get some evidence as to when he got those things — when he was in a particular place — little stamps on a piece of paper, or a telephone number written somewhere on a bit of manuscript paper. Finding manuscript paper of exactly the same type, one of which you know to have been bought from a particular shop, so it may have been from the same period . . . you can't guarantee it — you have to go into forensic evidence for that. But that's one way that people do it — Kirkpatrick was going down to forensic

evidence with the Ives manuscripts. His work was tremendous — it meant that he could accurately date things — and with Charles Ives it's much harder than with Berners. You find two really higgledy piggledy manuscripts and you can say, these are part of the same piece.

SB: Which leads on to *Sherlock Holmes*.

GB: Does it? Another fine musician.

SB: Is there proof of that?

GB: There is evidence that Watson thought he was. But we know that Watson's tastes in music were very limited. We know that, probably, Holmes was a musical connoisseur. Whether he was a very good executant is hard to say. He did write a dissertation on the motifs of Lassus.

SB: What was the piece you wrote based around *Sherlock Holmes* references?

GB: It was a poor piece and I haven't kept it. Holmes was going to a violin recital by Norman Neruda, and he says something to the effect of, "What is that little piece of Chopin's he plays so wonderfully? Tra la la lili lili lay." And I was trying to work out what this rhythmic mnemonic could mean. I thought that he'd got it wrong and it was actually *Carmen*. I went through a number of Chopin works that it could have been. I think that the idea of the piece was more interesting than the actual experience of it, which didn't work very well. It was put together in a hurry, like so many pieces. Some work, some don't. They get discarded, or they might appear in some other form.

## DISQUES DU CREPESCULES

SB: Are you happy with your new record? (2)

GB: Not entirely. I think the recording and the pressing are not that great. There were a lot of things about the recording which were compromises, which reflected budgets. We had to do it for nothing at college, in a room which was far from being sound-proof. So the microphoning had to be of a type I don't particularly like — close-recording pianos, for instance. It doesn't mean that I'm not happy about the project, or about working with this particular Belgian company, who seem to me to be very nice people.

DT: How did it come about?

GB: One of the chief people behind the company — Wim Mertens — is a radio producer in Belgium. I had done a concert, four years ago, with John White and Chris Hobbs, and a broadcast. Apart from being a radio producer, he's an academic. He's written a dissertation on aspects of "minimal music". He went into the record business with someone who was more involved in "rock music". He's involved in video productions — he video-ed us in Brussels, with an interview.

## MY FIRST HOMMAGE

SB: Is it my imagination or is there a bit of George Gershwin in "My First Hommage"?

GB: There is a quotation from "I Loves You Porgy", principally because that piece is based on Bill Evans' music, and that quotation comes in because . . .

SB: he did the piece in the same session that you refer to . . .

GB: But it wasn't on the original record. It's on the reissued version. (Reissued on *The Village Vanguard Sessions*, Milestone 47002, U.S., with Bill Evans — piano, Scott La Faro — bass, Paul Motian — drums.)

SB: Did you know that piece when you discovered Bill Evans?

GB: Oh no, I didn't know it then. That was why I put that particular quotation in when I actually did the piece. By that time I'd heard the complete tape and that was the only piece missing. I suppose they left it out because there was the other *Porgy and Bess* piece — "My Man's Gone Now" which I think is a much more substantial performance. But there's nothing bad about the whole afternoon and evening's music.

DT: What have you been doing recently?

GB: I've written some more pieces — the pieces on the record, apart from "My First Hommage". I've done some performances — but that's the everyday life of any of us really. There are things that have started in the last few months which have a momentum but it's hard to see what will result. For the first time people have actually started to commission me to write things and that's suddenly quite different. The first things were a couple of pieces for a dance group — Dance-work — with Chris Juffs and Tony Thatcher. That's something I enjoy. Jan Steele has asked me to write a sax piece for him — solo sax or sax and piano. He's even given me a date for the premiere. Things like that mean I'm no longer sitting back, wondering what to do next, or waiting for some concert to prod me into action. Also, this spring, I'm starting work with Bob Wilson. That means that there are expectations, deadlines, performance and rehearsal schedules. It's a different world altogether.

I've collaborated before — writing for Chris Juffs — and I don't mind that at all. The current collaborations are a bit different. I'm to be given much more my own head. Bob Wilson's come to me to work with him — I haven't gone touting for work — he's asking me to work with him because he knows the kind of music I write. He specifically doesn't want me to write like Philip Glass. I'm given a lot of freedom, although a lot of things arise through discussion. We agree that certain approaches will be appropriate for a particular section — there's a certain trial and error . . .

SB: There's more negotiation?

GB: Much more, and I accept that. We're talking about three five and a half hour operas — the scale is much bigger — with real opera singers. It's not even like *Einstein on the Beach* (3) where he was working more with dancers. He's moving — in these particular pieces, anyway — towards a very high calibre kind of performer. I've got to get it done before Christmas — it's three hours long and there are twenty three scenes. There's a chamber orchestra, six singers and a chorus — there's a lot of work to do there and I usually work very slowly. I also have work with Bob for '83 and '84 — each one of considerable dimension.

That's going to be a specific area of work that I've got to keep going that's going to make great demands. On the other hand, there are spinoffs that can be used in other pieces. I'm writing that much music that I'm bound to get a lot of things which will work in one context and not in another. He's perfectly agreeable to my music being used outside the productions. It's not a binding contract.

DT: Have you seen that movie, "Raise the Titanic"?

GB: No. ◇

## FOOTNOTES

(1) Lord Berners (1883-1950). English composer, painter and writer. In *Studio International*, Nov/Dec. 1976, Bryars wrote of Berners: "...Lord Berners, apart from a public life ranging from the diplomatic corps to being the focus of fashionable society, produced a curious body of music, painting and literature, whose importance is often masked by the very nature of his life-style. All three [referring to Berners, Rousseau and Satie] had little tuition in the art for which they are best known, and yet their work is of such startling originality that perhaps this in itself has been a contributing factor."

(2) *Hommages* on Disques de Crepescules, TWI 027. Includes "My First Hommage", "The English Mail Coach", "The Vespertine Park", "Hi-tremolo".

(3) *Einstein on the Beach* — an opera by Robert Wilson and Philip Glass, with choreography by Andrew de Groat — first performed in Europe and New York in 1976. For a full account of this opera see *MUSICS* no. 12, May 1977. Record released on Tomato TOM-4-2901.

Further information on Gavin Bryars can be found in the summer '81 issue of *CONTACT* magazine and in Michael Nyman's book *Experimental Music* — often available these days as a cheap remainder. Bryars has recorded for Incus, Obscure, Audio Arts, Pipe and Crepescules. ■ ■ ■



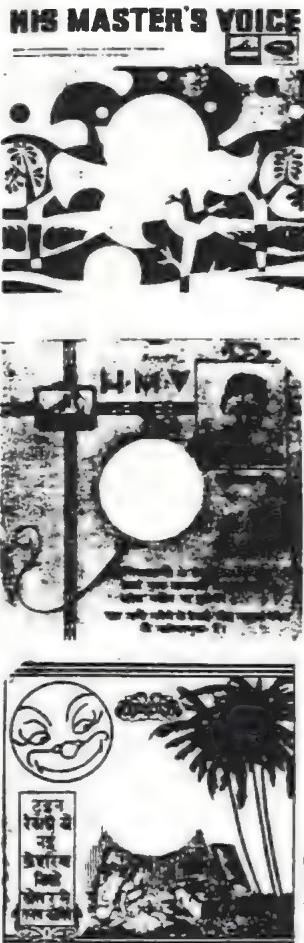
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Michael Brodie



## All-Talking All-Singing Sensation!

The Indian film industry is one of the largest in the world with music its greatest asset. Sheryl Garratt discovers the importance of song to cinema in popular Hindi film.

Probably the best way to introduce the Hindi film is to let its statistics speak for themselves. The industry is vast, turning out around 400 lengthy movies a year, nearly every one accompanied by a soundtrack album. In the UK alone, EMI sold over 300,000 records and cassettes of the music, yet it is only given airplay on 'minority' radio programmes and rarely mentioned in the media. The majority of Asian film and music critics are, in fact, united in their dislike of the industry, although demand is high enough to justify the production of more feet of film per year than anywhere but Hong Kong. Most of it is made in Bombay and in Hindi, the official national language of India, most of the films made in regional settings and languages

just being low-budget versions of the same ideas. As with all mass produced goods, the films have developed their own patterns and conventions and clichés abound, to some extent justifying the generalisations necessary in an article of this length. Basically, they are usually based on a flimsy plot centred around stylised 'hero' and 'villain' figures and held together with background music, along with a few songs and dances.

The strong links between music and drama stem back thousands of years to temple rituals and Sanskrit drama in which music, song and dance played an integral part rather than just a diversion/decoration as in Western musicals. This drama evolved from religious festivals and eventually died out until its revival under the British, but the traditions were continued in the *jatra*, or folk drama, particularly in Bengal and the surrounding areas. There is, for example, no separate word for the concepts of dance, music, and drama, 'sangita' meaning all three, and the idea of

acting without music is still strange to many Asians.

So when the first talking picture was released in India in 1931, it was not surprising that *Alum Ara* was advertised as an 'all-talking, all-singing sensation'. Although none of this film now survives, at the time its success was phenomenal and police had to be called in to quell ticket riots at many cinemas (a practice that is still common for popular new films). The formula was established, and as the public continue to show their approval at the box office, there seems little reason to change it. In fact it was another 23 years before an 'experimental' film called *Munna* was released. It was a resounding flop with Indian audiences but acclaimed at the '54 festivals in Europe, where many critics were unaware of its most controversial and daring innovation: *Munna* was the first Indian film to be made without a single song. Its failure was used as an excuse not to repeat the experiment, and the commercial cinema has produced few of these novelties since.



thanks to Mina, Zahid,  
Manjit & V. Kumar of the India  
Record Co. without whose help  
etc...

by Sheryl Garratt



*Alum Ara* included 12 songs, but many films of that era had 20, sometimes up to 40 numbers, the record being the Tamil film *Indra Sabha*, which boasted an incredible 71 tunes. Financial pressures have, however, crystallised the formula to more or less a couple of major stars, at least six songs, and a few dances. The plot usually revolves around some tale of boy-meets-girl, a tragedy or two, and a final, often improbable denouement leading to a happy ending, although adventure films are now becoming more popular too.

They usually open with a theme tune or overture which rarely has any relevance to the plot — the storyline is nearly always secondary to the music in any case. The lyricist is usually given the basic outline, then the dialogue writer has to twist the script to suit the songs, altering the plot if need be. This can sometimes stretch credibility to absurd lengths, as in *Aan* when actor Dilip Kumar supposedly sings a tuneful little number of lament while being flogged. This is no different to Western musicals, of course, except that this happens in every film, meaning that hordes of extras have to be worked into plots to form song or dance choruses, and every hero or heroine must sing. Many of the audience, in fact find the dialogue hard to follow, particularly if it is 'poetical', another inheritance from Sanskrit drama. This does not seem important, though: what amazed me on my first visits to Asian cinemas was that my Punjabi-speaking friends, who I had expected to translate for me, were as blissfully unaware of the meaning of the Hindi dialogue as I was. The main appeal seems to be the lavish costumes and settings, the beautifully choreographed dance sequences, and, of course, the music.



30 Collusion

In the early days, producers had difficulty finding heroes and heroines attractive enough to star in their pictures but also able to perform the requisite dance and vocal duties. Idols like K.L. Saigal were renowned for their voices, but his lanky frame and bald head posed a few challenges for the makeup, lighting and camera crews. These 'flaws' seemed to give him a far more powerful presence than the more plastic idols popular now (who are still more famous for their looks and star quality than any great acting ability), but in any case Saigal avoided contrast and ensured immortality by dying before the playback technique could usurp him.

Slowly though, this became the method used for fitting the most perfect voice to the most conventionally beautiful image. Dubbing, when the sound is added after the film has been shot as in Western musicals, is rarely used. Instead the hero/heroine mimes to the tape, and sound and vision are recorded simultaneously as with speech in order to save on costs. Villains, incidentally, are rarely allowed to sing, as music is equated with virtue, and once an actor has played a baddie, he hardly ever takes a hero role: typecasting is the norm.



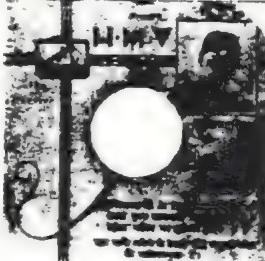
The song voice is recorded in one of the six studios in Bombay, and regardless of plot, character or context, the same few voices emerge from the mouths of nearly every actress or actor. The names of the playback singers are given equal billing with the stars, and musical directors will never take chances on unknown singers unless the material written for them is very strong: a popular soundtrack is essential for a film's success. Once recorded, one copy goes to the set for playback and the other to the record company — usually HMV-EMI. Hopefully, at least one of the tracks will have become a hit by the time of the film's release, guaranteeing box office queues even if the reviews are appalling.

The fierce competition for and reliance upon *names* means that the number of singers is small, and their power and influence huge. Politicians clamor to be photographed with them and use them to make recruiting jingles, and at least one of the major artists will appear on almost any soundtrack you care to mention: Asha Bhonsle, Mohammed Rafi, Kishore Kumar, Mukesh, Talat

Mehmood, and most of all, Lata Mangeshkar.

The 'undisputed melody queen of India' is now 53, and has sung for more films than anyone else in the world, with an entry in the *Guinness Book of Records* to prove it. Exact figures are hard to find, but it is estimated that she has recorded some 20,000 songs in various languages and been the ghost voice in around 2,000 films. Although she had been recording earlier, she has dominated the film scene since 1948, when she had a huge hit with Kehrmashad Prakash's *Aayega anewala*, and shows no signs of giving up that position willingly. Part of her success is no doubt due to her insisting on knowing the context in which her song will be placed so that she can convey the right mood, whereas most singers record in complete isolation from the film. The beauty of her voice is undeniable, though, and on a track with a good musical director, her range and expression can be stunning.

Few of those involved in the industry have had classical musical training, the intimate and usually lifelong master-pupil relationship that ensures the complex moods of the ragas that form the base of Indian music and the art of improvising upon them is preserved. The attempts of the British, and, after independence, Prime Minister Nehru, to revive traditional culture meant that music became fashionable among the middle classes, and for women musical skills became an added allure on the marriage market. As a result 'colleges' sprung up in many cities with offers of courses and diplomas, and although the teaching was obviously not as thorough, they took the mystique out of playing an instrument.



Many of the male graduates end up working in the glamorous film business, work often disdained by classically trained players.

Studio orchestras are often unnecessarily large, size being considered a status symbol by many directors, and usually include both Indian and Western instruments. This means that the 12-note Western scale and notation are used in arrangements rather than the more complex and subtle 22-sruti Indian scale, and there lies the controversy.

In one of the few books available in the UK on Indian music, R & J Massey devote just two pages to the sounds listened to by the majority of Indians, talking

angrily of the effect "this facile orchestration, these plagiarised melodies from foreign sources, and the mixture of native and alien instruments . . . have on the musical sensibility of the Indian people. This orchestrated mush has been blaring away in thousands of villages for over a generation and has now started to influence the folk music of the peasants. This music stems from the very soul of the people, and it would be a gigantic tragedy if the concoctions of the smart musicians in the Bombay studios were to injure so rich a tradition."

I see the point, but it really seems too late. The film industry has adapted those traditions and turned them into a mass commodity, and critical put downs of this "hybrid music" have little effect. On the other side, Naushad Ali, one of the most respected musical directors, claims the music the purists are lamenting was always the property of an elite anyway, and is totally inaccessible to the average Indian. Whatever, when Nehru appointed Dr. B. V. Keskar as Minister of Information and Broadcasting in 1952, it seems the public made up their minds for themselves.

### HIS MASTER'S VOICE



A great fan of classical music, Keskar saw the Government-run All-India Radio as the key to the revival of traditional culture, and immediately cut down on the airtime given to film music. This was followed by the decision that the name of song and singer may be announced on air, but not the film it came from, which would constitute illegal advertising. Incensed, the producers — who hold copyrights — withdrew permission to broadcast and literally overnight, film music vanished from AIR. Instead, the unperturbed Keskar began a vast programme of recording folk and classical music, a worthy quest that was taken to ridiculous extremes when the station began broadcasting regular readings in Sanskrit, a language understood by an estimated 555 people. Only "morally pure" music was allowed, and the listeners responded to this call for their spiritual well-being by switching en masse to Radio Ceylon, a high powered commercial station that had started sending out film music across India. High point of the week became the Binaca Toothpaste Hour on Wednesday night, a show run on a chart format similar to Radio One's Sunday night programme that had groups clustering

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around radios to listen for the fanfare that announced the week's number one tune.

Trying to minimise his role as his competitor's best PA, in '54 Keskar proclaimed that "except for raw and immature people like children and adolescents" his country folk detested film music. Yet somehow AIR continued to drop in popularity and the cinemas to flourish. The producers renewed permission to broadcast and waited, and by 1957, he gave in. A new service began from Madras and Bombay aiming at light music and entertainment and dominated, of course, by film songs.



Yet the debate continued, the question even coming up in Government. In '58 the Madras legislature discussed whether 'rock'n'roll' should be banned from Indian films completely, although no one seemed too sure what the term meant. The Home Minister Mr. Bhaktavatsam eventually offered the following: "I do not know the details or the technique of it, but I have heard it is an obscene dance performed by men and women."

Dance, in fact, became the main target for the moralists. Mrs Lilavah Munshi, founder of the Society for the Prevention of Unhealthy Trends in Motion Pictures, wrote that they "are all so designed as to excite the lower instinct lurking in every human being." By the mid-fifties, censorship had become obsessive, banning "kissing," unnecessary exhibition of female underclothing, intimate biological studies(!) and other such horrors. Every female body was checked minutely, and censors gave orders such as these for the Tamil film *Manitanam Mrigamun* (Man and Beast): "Reduce closeups and side shots of Kamala's busts in the second dance."

It appears that the classical traditions they were struggling to preserve were forgotten when it came to an art in the past perfected by temple prostitutes. (Although as with music, there is little in common with classical dance; the industry has again taken traditions and watered them down with only partly trained people and Western elements.)

As a result of this puritanism, the Indian cinema has become possibly the most erotic in the world due to its sheer power of suggestion. It has also given another role to music, which has become an understood substitute for the love making or emotion



Michael Brodie

that cannot be shown on screen. This music-sex equation has remained long after the rules had been relaxed, and if the missionary zeal of the era seems absurd, it is worth remembering what one Senator Joe MacCarthy was doing in Hollywood at the same time.



From prudery to purity, then, and back to the question of 'hybrid' music. Sometimes whole tunes (as well as plots) are borrowed and transplanted such as the version of "The Young Ones" featured in the 79/80 hit movie *Des Perdes*, and other tunes can be a patchwork mess of different musics with the joins clearly showing. Mainly though, the plagiarised jazz, latin and pop influences are so well blended that to Western ears they sound totally Indian, but there is no doubt that the sacred ragas are slowly getting mangled. The versions played by the Bombay musicians are taken for the real thing by listeners and the circle moves on, while film songs are also forcing their way into folk, narrowing the differences between the many various kinds, thanks to the wondrous creation of radio and mass communication. Constant repetition is also becoming available now in the shape of the cassette, which EMI are boldly pushing into villages where no record player had gone before. The story is sad, but in a way inevitable, and I fail to see how

the purists can deny others the modern toys they themselves enjoy simply to preserve dying traditions.

Anyway, the music can be fun: listen to the soundtrack of *Shalimar*, one of the newer James Bond-type movies ("Turn on this record and the record will turn you on"), especially "One Two, Cha Cha Cha", an Indian/Latin track that makes Modern Romance's efforts sound positively tasteful: And there is more than just kitsch value: on her hit from *Aasha* in '81, "Shisha hoyya dil ho", Lata Mangeshkar's voice is at its best and is truly beautiful. The women singers especially can reach an almost unearthly quality that Western singers couldn't even attempt, and hybrid or not, something essentially Indian has survived.

The main problem with the music, and with the industry as a whole, is the lack of serious competition. In his book on Satyajit Ray, Chidananda Das Gupta reports overhearing "ordinary Calcuttans" leaving the cinema after seeing Ray's debut film, *Panther Panchali* exclaiming "The bastards had been cheating us all this time — this is the real stuff!" Be that as it may, the audience for 'quality' films by the likes of Ray (who uses classical musicians such as Ravi Shankar and Vilayat Khan for his movies, or composes his own music) or for imported Western films is usually totally different to those who watch the Hindi and regional films. Going to the cinema is still the country's only mass entertainment, and the films are made purely for profit: entertainment without any pretensions to Art or immortality that has therefore tended to stagnate into the formula that sells most tickets and records. Finally though, at least on the musical front, there is competition.

In March '81 an album called *Disco Deewane* (Disco Crazy) was released, sung by Nazia Hussain and on some tracks also her younger brother Zoheb, recorded in London with UK session players, and written by Zoheb and Biddu the man behind Tina Charles, Carl Douglas' "Kung Fu Fighting", and the sale of some 27 million records worldwide. It went gold on the day of release and within three weeks had sold over 200,000 copies, a record-breaker even by Indian standards. By 'disco', read Abba rather than Chic, but the album is well-produced and worth listening to if only for the beautiful ballad "Komal". It has also seriously challenged the monopoly film songs have had over pop music for the first time.

Other things are changing too. According to an article by Samir Shah in *City Limits*, in '77 there were 152 cinemas in the UK showing Bombay films, and now there are only 16. Film consumption hasn't dropped, it has just moved from the cinemas to the home, and for sound economic reasons. It is far cheaper to replace the weekly family visit to the movies by hiring a video and cassette. The very nature of the films, with their emphasis on music and dance makes them ideal for video because like the video LP's being pioneered by Blondie and co., they can be played repeatedly without getting tedious. And because the video films are usually hired, record sales remain relatively unaffected, and in some cases have even increased when the movie has been made available in this way.

Whether critics accept it or not, the Hindi film has become an integral part of the culture of many Asians, as predictable as a Big Mac or a Cartland novel, only more entertaining. The only way to judge, really, is to see a few for yourself.

# Gracie Fields

Before 1939 the most popular singer in Britain by far was Gracie Fields. Her shows always sold out and her records (released monthly) gave her record companies a steady income through the depression. In the 1930s she was Britain's best paid film star (she got £40,000 per film) and even Hollywood took note — at the end of the decade Twentieth Century Fox paid her a £200,000 advance to make four films for them. In 1924, when she first came to national fame, she even played three London venues simultaneously: a straight part in *SOS* at the middle-brow St James Theatre, top of the bill at the low-brow Alhambra, Leicester Square, the late night spot at the high-brow Cafe Royal. But she became a superstar as the media symbol of the working class, its cheeriness under economic pressure, etc.

In 1934 the Tory Major Rawdon Hoare wrote:

'In her own way, she has done a tremendous amount of good. In the cinemas there is an absence of healthy amusement, there is too much sex appeal; but in the performance of Gracie Fields we get a breath of fresh air and an opportunity for some real laughter. This all helps to keep the right spirit of England together — clean living, with a total absence of anything bordering on the unnatural.'

## From Rochdale to Capri

When I first saw Gracie Fields, on television in the '60s, she was the matron of British show business, a straight-backed, good looking woman in her sixties (she was born in 1898) who sang hymns on *Stars on Sunday* and variety shows and, later, spoke graciously to people like Russell Harty. She lived in Capri and the island seemed to share her appeal — respectable, self-made hedonism, tasteful vulgarity. She was a symbol of nostalgia — for some pre-war working class community, for some pre-tv, un-American, British entertainment. Gracie Fields had become a character from *Coronation Street* and I never thought to take her seriously as a musician.

In the last couple of years, since her death, I've been listening to Gracie Fields' pre-war records, learning to hear through her later, comfortable 'personality'. Gracie Fields was a huge star for a good reason — she was a great performer — and her mass marketing followed her success. Her skills were developed in live performance. As a stage struck Rochdale child she had brief spells with the Haley Garden of Girls and Clara Cover-

dale's Juveniles which taught her to sing and dance in public. She learned comic techniques in a summer season with Cousin Freddy's Pierrot Concert Party, and became a full time professional in a travelling revue, *Yes I Think So*, when she was only sixteen. Her style was moulded by Archie Pitt, a cockney comedian turned writer/impresario (who became her husband). Security came with *Mr Tower of London*, which opened in 1918 and toured for nearly ten years — it didn't reach the West End until 1924. By then its cast had become a strangely, tensely intimate team. Gracie had not only had to get used to the travel, the grotty halls, the cold landladies and bedrooms but she had also become the show's star, the reason for its success, and carried her family with her — her younger sisters and brother performed too, Archie's brother was the company's businessman.

## Our Gracie

The public persona that Gracie Fields developed during these years reflected her private situation. She was the big spinster sister (the comi-pathetic figure of her own 'In My Little Bottom Drawer'), a shy, gawky woman who was, in '20s terms, unfeminine, innocent and asexual (even her most broadly comic songs had no innuendo, no double entendres). On stage, though, she had no inhibitions. She was the noisy girl on the factory outing who lead the coach party singing, was always good for a laugh and never paired off when the singing stopped and the bus got close to home.

Gracie Fields was a music hall comedienne who had no malice, a music hall singer who had no airs. Even in her films she played the friend rather than the lover, a star who was common not glamorous, and her stories moved to political rather than romantic resolutions, as Gracie brought together North and South, owner and worker, parent and child in a final singsong. In *Look Up And Laugh* Gracie played an actress who led the local market stall holders in a successful battle against both the local council and a national chainstore owner. In *Shipyard Sally* Gracie was a variety singer who saved Clydebank from closure by getting its workers' petition to a benevolent peer politician. Graham Green wrote:

'All Miss Fields's pictures seem designed to show a sympathy for the working class and an ability to appeal to the best classes: unemployment can always be wiped out by a sentimental song, industrial



# NORTH SOUTH

★ ★

unrest is calmed by a Victorian ballad, and dividends are made safe for democracy.'

example) but she could never express the rough, subversive working class spirit of a Frank Randle (celebrated in Jeff Nuttall's *King Twist*). Her performances were always about keeping up appearances.

And Gracie had appearances to keep up. She had married Archie Pitt for business not romantic reasons, and as her husband / manager / producer he continued to bully her, to mock her claims to artistic autonomy. He threw doubt too on her sexual appeal, installing his mistress in their home, falling in with the Fields' family line that Gracie (unlike her sisters) was too plain, too ordinary, too sensible for passion. But on stage her energy rode through her self-pity. She was a 'natural' performer who was entirely self-conscious, and I'm sure that she was loved by her audiences — 'Our Gracie' was the affectionate slogan — because they understood the work that went into her cheerfulness. They were clapping her on.

## Keeping Up Appearances

Social historians, trying to make sense of Gracie Fields' popularity in retrospect, have developed their own clichés for her: she expressed 'the humour, doggedness and cynicism of the workers'; she symbolised 'a humourous, long-suffering but optimistic sentiment'; she and her audiences shared 'a vulgar, private language.' What such descriptions miss is the tension involved in smiling through. Gracie's was the voice of the respectable working class hanging on to their tatters of lace-curtained pride despite everything (for the difficulties of this struggle in the '30s see Walter Greenwood's *Love on the Dole*). Gracie could mock this part (on 'Turn 'Erbert's Face To The Wall, Mother', for

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as a live performer was an ability to change the theatre into the front room. She sang her comic and serious songs both as if chattering while hanging up the washing over the wall.

#### The Singer as Mimic

There are numerous Gracie Fields records in the shops still, but they are mostly patchy, uninformative collections, drawing heavily on her post-war tracks when her audiences were content with the familiar routines which she mostly gave them. The best album I've found is *Gracie Fields - Stage and Screen* (World Record Club) which includes a recording of her performance at the Holborn Empire in 1933 and songs from the soundtracks of her '30s films.

Listening to this I'm struck less by her warmth and timing (the usual music hall gifts) than by her mimicry. Listen to her version of 'Stormy Weather', for example, Gracie introduces the song — by then a standard Tin Pan Alley blues — with a rapid, exuberant scat and mutters a jokey aside to the audience, but when the lyric proper starts her interpretation is sober and moving. She doesn't pretend to be a blues singer, offers no marks of her own emotions; rather, she imitates, somewhat wistfully, the American blues mood in general. Her voice becomes a muted trumpet, the sounds drift like smoke out of a night club. (The same technique can be heard elsewhere, on 'Lancashire Blues'. Gracie pays tribute to black American music not by imitating its voices but by gesturing at the instrumental sound of the big band — the solos, the sustained, swollen notes.)

#### From Child's Play to Social Commentary

Even as a comic singer Gracie was more concerned with sounds than words, with teasing hesitations, constant changes of tone, with trills and swoops and cries. Her pleasure in a narrative like 'Heaven Will Protect An Honest Girl' is less in the clever verse than in the different voices — the mother, the policeman, the naive Northern lass; by the end of the performance we don't know what the next sound will be.

The great popular singers can make the dullest songs into the most vital conversations. In black music what is at issue is the stylization of personal emotion. Glib tunes are invested with complex feeling. Gracie Fields came from a different expressive tradition. She also laid personal claim to standard catchy pop, but her claim was not emotional but playful. She sang as if reacting spontaneously to the possibilities

of the sounds, rather than the meanings, of words. Repeating the ones she liked, swallowing the ones she didn't, milking each consonant and vowel for its connotations, endlessly shifting the ways the same words can be said. What she knew, of course, and what turned such child's play into social commentary, was that sounds and accents and tones of voice, just as much as words, have a public, political meaning. Gracie Fields' performances, in their very musical jokiness, still offer sharp and subtle accounts of class (and sexual) forms of talk. Her art was to make music (and mockery) out of everyday speech.

#### Making Conversation Sing

This skill — making conversation sing — has always been central to popular performance (rap is the latest example of the long tradition of black American musical 'jones' and 'dozens'), but even as Gracie Fields was reaching the height of her popularity, pop singing was being turned into a stylish artifice by Tin Pan Alley's concern for mass, multi-national music. Song writers went on working with turns of speech, with clichés and catch phrases, but singers (the crooners, for example) had a new, personal, style. Their tone of voice was invariably intimate; it no longer took on the sounds of conversation. These sounds (and not the sentimental singalongs of *Those were the Days* or Paul McCartney) were the essence of British music hall; they are still explored by a music hall influenced artist like Ian Dury. For Dury, as for Gracie Fields, performance is a chance to put on a persona, to make a manner of speaking a way of singing.

Gracie Fields' originality as a singer depended on her silence as a listener — charting the inflections of her family and friends as they made their way up the social ladder, eavesdropping on the sexual banter that never seemed to be aimed at her, responding to the collective conversations of her audiences. She certainly was wholesome and bright and all those other things that people wrote; she certainly did hope to put the world to rights in a sentimental song. But she also took an infectious pleasure in singing. It was as if she was only in control of herself on stage, only in charge of language when moulding it for herself in song. And it's this pleasure, this expression of creative power, that I still find myself responding to, still find myself drawn to, over and over again. ★

(For the facts of Gracie Fields' life see Muriel Burgess and Tommy Keen: *Gracie Fields, Star Books*)



Gracie Fields entertaining the troops.

# SOUTHERN SOUL



#### The Mill Girl with the Operatic Voice

I started listening to Gracie Fields' records because I was interested in the way women have expressed themselves in British popular music. She was an unusual female star because she was not obliged (like virtually all female pop singers since) to sing for men, to limit her identity to the problems of getting/losing a partner. Her femaleness was a matter of domesticity rather than femininity; her songs were 'sentimental' because they described family rather than sexual affections, mother or daughter rather than lover problems. But Gracie Fields was an unusual female singer because her voice was so remarkable. Technically she was a soprano, and she had some of the vocal qualities of an opera singer — she could sing loudly while keeping a pure tone; her notes were open, sung from the chest rather than the throat; she made

effective use of a controlled tremolo.

The joke was that such a grand bourgeois voice should belong to a shrill Lancashire mill girl, and as a music hall comic Gracie exploited this joke to the full. Her trademark was the burlesqued ballad. She would begin straightforwardly, using all the signs of sincerity and romantic fervour that music hall singers had learnt from European operetta. She had the right emotional tremble, she invested the most banal words with physical urgency, she aimed the audience at the final melodramatic release. And then she would switch sounds, lapse into a Lancashire accent at the height of the melodic build, push her tremour into an uncontrollable noise. She put the conventional vocabulary of emotional expression under constant threat. Every time a song got serious Gracie would take on a voice of bemused innocence, move into the conversational mode of her comic patter songs. Her most important asset

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"His anointed fingers tickled his instrument."  
(Corliss A. Rabb)

Vernard Johnson's "I'll Make it Alright" has a screaming sax introduction straight out of Junior Walker's "Shake and Fingerpop". In "Vernard Moans" he plays repeated blues phrases and single-note honks like a '50s rhythm and blues tenor player. "God Will Take Care of You" begins with the delicacy of a light gospel falsetto and expands into a huge sound that will remind you of Albert Ayler. Johnson began playing alto sax in jazz and rock groups in Kansas City, where his father was pastor at the Faith Deliverance Church of God in Christ.

"I can remember times when I would be playing the sax and have an asthma attack, but I continued to play." When he was 17, I looked up and said "God, if you're truly real, I want you to touch my lungs and heal me of asthma, and if you do, I'll play for you for the rest of my life" . . . A few weeks later as I was playing "Amazing Grace", God touched and healed my lungs. I began playing the saxophone at church."

Now he plays only religious music, accompanied in the studio by the customary organ, piano, bass and drums, and sometimes voices. Hearing him and a shouting congregation tearing up "Amazing Grace" is, as Terry Day said about Albert Ayler, "a shock to the bodily system." There's a live version on *The Best of Vernard Johnson* (Savoy SGL 7062, 1980); it's a hard record to find, but some of the tracks are duplicated on a 1978 studio-only album — *Take Your Burdens to the Lord* (Glori JC-1042), on which the sleeve notes clearly state, "Before Vernard's style was introduced, not only the saxophone, but other instruments were lying dormant in the church."



VERNARD JOHNSON

Anointed  
Fingers  
the gospel  
saxophone  
of  
VERNARD  
JOHNSON  
by  
steve  
beresford



Albert Ayler photo by Val Wilmer

Altoist Marion Brown suggested — in conversation with Robert Palmer — "a whole tradition of saxophones in the church" — in clear contradiction to Johnson's P.R., all of which claims his uniqueness. If there is a tradition, it's well hidden — Tony Heilbut's carefully researched book *The Gospel Sound* doesn't mention the saxophone, for instance.

Brown and Palmer's conversation (on the notes to *Albert Ayler — The Village Concerts* on Impulse IA-9336/2) does point out the undeniable resemblance to Ayler's work. When Ayler plays alto, the resemblance is very clear, but his simple melodies, wide vibrato, controlled use of the upper register and melodramatic timing, are all paralleled in parts of Johnson's work. His interests were clearly religious, and Call Cobbs — almost certainly Ayler's pianist on "Angels" — echoes the style and role of Johnson's pianist, Aaron Martin. Yet there is no evidence of direct influence — Ayler died in 1970 and Johnson looks to be in his early 30s (Savoy declined to give his birthdate) but evidently he started playing popular music in his mid-teens.

Even though his saxophone playing has the power and emotional clarity to replace the preacher for the most impassioned congregations, he feels moved to use words sometimes. "Have you got a handkerchief?" he shouts through the mike clamped to the sax bell. "I want you to take it out Right Now!". Kleenex are advisable for any serious listening to Mr. Johnson's amazing records. □

Thanks to Savoy Records, P.O. Box 279, Elizabeth, N.J., U.S.A. for photos and information.

# A CAJUN WEEKEND

## in the labyrinth that time forgot



by

Graeme Ewens

drawings by Megan Green

Graeme Ewens spends a weekend traversing Louisiana in search of Cajun music and musicians.

Where southern Louisiana meets the Gulf of Mexico there is no hard edge line of coast — just thousands of overgrown islands through which the Mississippi strains itself, having cut the country from top to bottom. New Orleans basks gracefully in high humidity on the southernmost tip of the bird's foot delta. To the East of Baton Rouge, Interstate 10 runs on 40 miles of white concrete stilts across the Atchafalaya river basin, which spreads itself in a wide and majestic lattice of oxbows, meanders and bayous. Away from the superhighway, the flatlands and their occupants seem to have been passed over by time.

### "ALLONS À LAFAYETTE"

Anywhere within 70 miles west of Lafayette a flick of the radio dial will introduce the haunting wheeze of accordions and fiddles playing anachronistic waltzes and two-steps. The voices which deliver the song lyrics and station announcements speak the strange, clotted off-French dialect of the Cajuns — a people not to be confused with the Creoles. When they were transported from Canada by the British in 1755, the expatriate French Acadians found little welcome from the Creole survivors of the French occupation of Louisiana.

Dispossessed of their chosen land the Cajuns have been left in virtual isolation for two centuries to preserve their cultural identity as they may. The antiquated form of music which is an essential part of Cajun life can sound more

European than Appalachian music, but is unmistakably a product of the bayous.

### "LAISSEZ LES BON TEMPS ROULET"

As most of the locals work the land from dawn to dusk, the weekend nights provide the only opportunity to party — and these people know how they like to go. Louisiana is rich in musical heritage, yet none is more regularly and enthusiastically celebrated than that of the Cajuns. Most small towns have their own resident Playboys or Orchestras who travel within a short radius. The recording studios of Crowley, Ville Platte and Opelousas cut as many French as English records.

Fireflies splatter their final phosphorescence on the windshield as the lights of a rented car hesitantly probe the black night,

searching out the location of a Friday *fais-do-do*. The state highway signs are not easy to follow nor do the social haunts scream for the attention of passing trade. The only clue may be a door in a hole in the wall, with a title such as 'Bar', 'Lounge' or 'Cafe', and perhaps the primordial sounds which sigh through clapboard walls and extractor fans. 'The Blue Goose' in Eunice was one such place. Accordion music filtered from the rear into the neighbourhood silence. Pick-up trucks nestled up to the windowless front wall. A single door beneath the painted name invited opening. Heads angled a degree or two from the direction of the bartender to the opening door and back. The front room was a small bar doing reasonable business. Ahead was a doorless opening to the darker, more boisterous atmosphere of the dance hall.



The dim-lit room was like the inside of a flimsy seaside chalet or a temporary English village hall. Tables were clustered round the walls, leaving a space occupied by a dozen or so dancing couples. At one end was a short, narrow stage fenced off with a blue-painted verandah rail. On this unlit podium the Mamou Playboys were fiddling, strumming, squeezing and wailing through the repertoire of hark-back laments. No applause greeted the musicians after the numbers, they stood there virtually forgotten — paunchy, middle-aged weary bodies from which only the eyes and hands appeared to twinkle. The audience traditionally show their appreciation by enthusiastically dancing their unique steps to the simple rhythms, helped into a semi-trance state by the cyclical melodies. The only sideways looks are aimed at those strangers who don't take to the floor. Cajuns know of only one way to respond to the music.

Although the songs are mostly about love, pretty girls and dancing, they seemed to tell of deeper emotions. The singers stretch the

syllables to crying point; many verses begin with an extended moaning *ohh* sound, loaded with despair. This archaic music seems to function as the mourning of an exiled community for something far away, whose memory has retreated into the collective subconscious.

#### THE MIXED CAJUN HERITAGE

Many of the 50 or so people who half filled the floor bore caricature resemblance to French peasants. Others, mostly the younger ones, exhibited clues to less introverted genetic heritage. Some had really dark skin. The plaster cast on one man's arm contrasted with his swarthiness. He was a mortician, an undertaker whose injury was collected beneath the falling lid of a coffin. His friend taunted him with undamaged, swollen nut-brown biceps. Out of the darkness both pairs of eyes sparkled while the men each juggled the affections of two women, taking one at a time around the floor with ingrained waltz delight. During instrumental numbers the vocalist,

almost as round as he is tall, would swoop down on a curly-haired, middle-aged waitress or one of the dozen lookalikes and spin her through the crowd. The demand for good hot *file gumbo* subsided after midnight; while the beer continued to flow, the dancers had become the most liquid element.

In keeping with the local attitude to plumbing and lavatorial traditions, the men's room at the 'Blue Goose' had no lock on the door. There was a hole punched through at about lock height to show that someone at least had tired of privacy. An occupant was standing over the swirling bowl when the door burst open in front of single-minded cajun cowboy who pushed his way to a share of the target. 'Cava?' — 'Oui, c'est bon', he replied from under the Western hat, 'But I've been holding this sunbitch too long'. These ol' boys enjoy the ruggedness of their life. At weekends then hunt 'gators, shoot and trap racoons and dip their poles after crawfish. License plates call it 'Sportsman's Paradise'.

#### THIS IS MAMOU CAJUN RADIO

About ten miles to the north of Eunice on Route 13 lies Mamou. The action in Mamou stirs into life as the sun comes up on Saturday, with an early morning dance in Fred's Lounge. This show is transmitted live on KEUN radio, and has been hosted for the last 30 years by Revon Reed. It is the last survivor of a type of country radio programming which peaked with the Louisiana Hayride and Grand Ole Opry. But the time slot and chaotic informality of Reed's show is pure Cajun.

By 8am customers are already drinking at Fred's Lounge. Outside in the single story main street, there is no sign of a transmitter truck, antenna or power cables, but within the bar a roped-off area marks the dj's enclosure. On a hospital trolley is a mixer/amp, a 1930s microphone and a miniature plastic toilet bowl filled with ice. Some musicians are setting up equipment.

By 9am Fred's is beginning to swing and The Grand Mamou Orchestra starts their three hour live broadcast. There are two fiddles in the band, the obligatory accordian, no drums; just a triangle, and a dummy on a dummy guitar. He is the only young member of the band, and he sits while the others stand. He strums a leadless imitation Fender Solid, playing it left-handed and upside down; instead of six strings he has only two which he has difficulty hitting every time, even with his plectrum. But he is happy to be there and no-one seems to mind him. Between numbers he mops his brow with a bandana. A sign on the wall says 'No substitute musicians allowed during transmission'.

The bar begins to fill and without obligation most customers order beer or liquor. A man, who may be Fred, with chiselled features, tousled hair and wearing an army green boiler suit and bare feet, is busy mingling. A black dog the size of his foot flickers around, never daring to go too far away, never bold enough to get under his toes.

Couples step down from the bar to dance. A sign on the wall does not inhibit them: 'This is not a dance hall. No responsibility for anyone hurt dancing.' Between traditional waltzes the announcer and/or one of the fiddlers talk



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into the radio mike, reading ads from newspapers and notepads, unheard inside the lounge. The green boiler suit gets a cloth from the barmaid and crosses the floor to dust a painting on the wall; a kind of abstract, dark, apocalyptic and fuzzy. He appears to tell someone it is his own work.

## ZYDECO AND LA-LA MUSIC

A black cowboy standing behind the radio announcer's desk is greeted by all. He stands portly and proud in embroidered shirt, fancy belt and hat, smiling, comfortably at ease. He knows the score. He is one of the Ardoin Brothers Orchestra, possibly waiting to join in with his accordian. Outside on the street a gentleman wearing a white suit and spotted bow tie — comfortable accessories to his southern dignity — is talking to some out-of-town visitors. He is a relative of Fred and a member of the law firm whose brick building opposite is the biggest in town. As a champion of the Cajun music scene he is pleased that people come great distances to hear French music but is sad that so little of the contemporary material is recorded.

French music, as the Cajuns call it, has changed little over the years, certainly not since the recordings of the 1930s. The songs, the instrumentation and the feeling are traditional. As Alton Rubin says, 'The French music don't change. It is the music of the old people, although all kinds of people listen to it. But there's so much you do have to change. People change so you have to change — make the music more for young people.' Alton is black, but unlike the Ardoin brothers he plays electric French music for younger people; under the name of Rockin' Dopsie.



Although he grew up hearing and speaking only French, Alton was also exposed to the blues tradition, mostly via the Texas radio stations across the state line. Muddy Waters, Slim Harpo and Lightning Slim influenced him. When he was in his 20s he made the hundred miles or so to New Orleans for the first time. There he listened to jazz and followed Fats Domino, who became a friend, but he still relied on 'natural French' music to make his living around Lafayette. The zydeco music which he now plays is a black expression of the French tradition fused with blues and incorporating *la-la* music, an extinct form of black folk music with Caribbean undertones; zydeco is said to be invented by Clifton Chenier.

'You've got to give Clifton the credit for that', says Alton. And most people do. Chenier is the big

attraction in these parts, affectionately known to all by his first name. They say Lightning Hopkins first used the word zydeco in a song, but Clifton put the spice in 'Les haricots' single-handedly, synthesising a very local strain of rhythm and blues. Electric bass and guitar are used with washboard vest, and eventually saxophones have been added to the obligatory accordian. Squeeze boxes are heard in many forms of American (and Mexican) folk music but zydeco represents the only use of the instrument in black American music. But the derivative white southern rockers may claim, this is bayou boogie — black music. Dopsie himself knows of only a handful of other zydeco bands — Stanley 'Buckwheat' Dural, who includes keyboards in his line-up, Ernest Arceneux, aka Ernest/Furnace and The Thunders, Queen Ida, and a family group The Sam Brothers Five.

Dopsie, Clifton and Queen Ida have been well received in Europe but although Alton likes to visit London, he is able to make a decent living playing close to home. Zydeco bands do not even need to go farther than Texas or New Orleans — except to promote records. The community around Lafayette is a pleasantly integrated one says Alton; black people go to white clubs, whites go to the black places, they get along like brother and sister. People just come to hear the music and it's really friendly. Many of the black clubs, though, are hard to find even when you know where they are supposed to be.

## JAY'S FAMOUS LOUNGE AND COCKPIT

Rockin' Dopsie and his Cajun Twisters have certainly played in Jay's Lounge at Cankton — about as close as you'll ever get to a red-neck honky-tonk. Jay's is back down Route 93 towards the Interstate. It is a big, old single story barn made of split tree trunks with a corrugated roof. The sign above proclaims it as 'Jay's Famous Lounge and Cockpit. Featuring country music.' The doorway is flanked by two wagon wheels embedded in the dirt. The hitching posts are there too, but they have been cut down to bumper level to stop people trying to park inside. The whole building is full of cracks and knot holes. The front door is held shut by a wire which can be reached at any time through a fist size hole.

Jay's gets going on a Saturday night and the action is late. The style of music they promote is reflected in the photographs of previous attractions pinned to the ceiling, featuring country music in its widest and un-segregated sense, from Joe Ely to Lightning Hopkins and everything in between, with French, blues and



Louisiana rockabilly predominant. Some nights the wooden floors groan under 1,000 or more paying dancers. Huge fans revolve slowly inside the walls and when the place gets really steamy, the complete wall behind the stage is lifted out like an awning.



This Saturday night there are only half a dozen couples on the floor at 11.30, although the gravel parking lot is crowded with at least 100 cars. Says Rubin 'You get a crowd who comes to watch the chickens fight and you get a crowd who comes to dance — and they don't fool with the roosters none. But right after the rooster fight, which is when half the sorry cockerels are dead, the people come in from the back room and dance.'

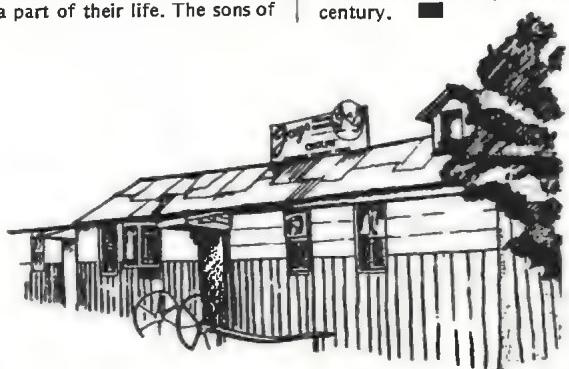
## THE SHAMEFUL SIDELINE

Cockfighting is a shameful business, and it comes as no great surprise to learn that this archaic 'sport' continues in a community which in so many ways is out of time, even with southern redneck culture. Here at Jay's, cockfighting is a part of their life. The sons of

the lady owner keep their own fighting cocks. One that has won three fights is worth \$300 but he will not be sold. Chickens are always fought to the death: 'Who wants a beaten bird? They can't fight, and you don't breed from them.'

The band, which this night has been unable to draw from the cock fight crowd, strikes up 'La Belle de la Louisiana' for an obese barmaid who has to two-step from the ice box to avoid the holes in the floor. They have played two sets and the musicians begin to pack up at about 1am. In back road honky-tonks and lounges other bands play into the night.

Down the road, Interstate 10 carries the world on by in real time. The rental car slips down the on-ramp and is pointed between the fences and over the bridges, behind the trees and between the ditches, through the boondocks heading for the bright lights. The whine of the highway, which flashes over the bayous, obscures the plaintive cry of a displaced people, but their sound is too well established to be drowned out totally by the 20th century.



# Long After Tonight is All Over - Northern Soul



## Stuart Cosgrove



With last September's closure of the Wigan Casino an era in the Northern Soul phenomenon ended. Stuart Cosgrove describes the importance of the Casino to Northern dancers and rare soul collectors, gives an outline of the movement and looks at the songs and singers.

Jimmy Radcliffe's "Long After Tonight Is All Over" is both an anthem and a requiem. It first established itself as a cult record by being the sound that signalled the end of all-night sessions at the Twisted Wheel club in Manchester which has long since had a legendary reputation as one of the havens of rare soul. A mid-tempo sound which is simultaneously about leaving and meeting again, it is the perfect end to all-nighters where the dancers identify with the club and return to it regularly over the years. Soon after 9.00am on Sunday 20th September 1981 the opening bars of "Long After Tonight is All Over" signified not only the end of the night but proverbially 'the end of an era': the closure of Wigan Casino, one of the greatest and most cherished venues of Northern Soul music. In talking about the Casino, words of praise of a club's formidable contribution to Britain's rare soul scene, it is also an obituary and a critique. Wigan Casino's eight year history was marked by the seemingly endless sagas of achievement and controversy. The records it 'discovered' and persevered with will live on at future venues and the dancers it gave space to will reappear elsewhere. But the venue itself is finished only to be remembered in legends and stories, some real and some imaginary, told in other places long after tonight is all over.



Junior Walker and the All Stars

### Northern Soul: Time Will Pass You By

When Tobi Legend recorded "Time Will Pass You By" for Bell's subsidiary record label *Mala* in 1968, the company could not possibly have predicted that over twelve years later one of their least successful records would be known word for word by thousands of people in another continent. But put quite simply "Time Will Pass You By" is not only a Northern Soul record it is also a record about Northern Soul. Its lyrics hint at the scene's history and make reference to its defining style . . .

As I sit here looking at the street,  
Little figures, quickly moving feet,  
Life is just a precious minute,  
Open up your eyes and see,  
Give yourself a better chance,  
Because Time will pass you by.

The chorus refers to a life of the streets and Northern Soul is

primarily a sub-culture of the cities. From Edwin Starr's "Back-streets" to Frankie Valli's "The Night" it is a scene that thrives on images of darkness, street life, night-time and the slightly seedy environments of old dancehalls and railway stations. The most remembered all-night venues have been decaying clubs in the back-streets of old industrial cities. Wigan Casino was notoriously seedy, its toilets permanently ankle deep in piss and rusty condensation dripped regularly from the high ceilings. It was no place for the faint of heart or the uncommitted sightseers attracted by Northern Soul's tempting atmosphere.

The Casino was a place for quickly moving feet. The soul enthusiasts who nimbly evaded puddles of piss to change into new clothes in toilet cubicles were the fancy dancers on whom the Northern scene's reputation hinges. One of the consistent features of the rare soul scene has been its ability to reproduce superb dancers who can predict almost every beat and soulclap in

a thousand unknown sounds. But Northern soul dancing is not only the backdrops, swallow dives and spins that catch the eye of the onlooker, it is more importantly the ritual elegance of a dance style that glides from side to side but refuses to adopt a name. The *Daily Express* thought that they would christen it the "wheelie" but no one paid any attention because for Northern Soul the mass media is something to be ridiculed, a cross they have to bear every few years when white rock fails to produce good copy. The media attention like the disjointed words of "Time Will Pass You By" moves on to new images and new themes. Implicit in Tobi Legend's line "Life is just a precious minute," is a reminder that Northern Soul like other sub-cultures is transient and shifting. The people move from city to city. When a venue closes they move on to another and when records have had their time they disappear to reappear at a later time as memories and legends. The Northern Soul scene is a drug scene. It is a scene permanently living on the fringes

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of the law. Its clubs lose their licences; the trains that carry dancers from Manchester, Leeds and Crewe are invariably met by uniformed police and plain clothed drugs squad members, and much of the activity of the scene is covered in friendly secrecy. Over the years Black America has had a catalogue of tragedies involving singers and songwriters. Charlie Parker became entrapped in an endless cycle of heroin addiction, Frankie Lyman and Billie Holiday both died through drugs, whilst Esther Phillips and Etta James, who have both recorded songs which had exposure in the Northern clubs, reached the perimeters of addiction before rebuilding their careers.

At times it seems as if the Northern Soul scene tries to re-live and imitate the imagery of Black America. The music, the black berets and gloves that were once fashionable on the scene, and the catalogue of deaths that have befallen the scene over the years makes the two cultures have much in common. But the Northern Soul scene is predominantly a soft drugs scene. Although it has had its tragedies in the form of broken needles in the toilets and early deaths remembered in dedicated records over the sound systems of the all-nighters, the Northern scene is in fact more about amphetamines than hard drug taking. There has always been a current within the scene that has criticised its reputation as a drug culture arguing that the minority tarnish the image of the majority and their music. But for a number of reasons amphetamines and rare soul have a history together which is evident in the earliest days of the original mods and in the emergence of all-night clubs in the mid sixties. The vast majority of Northern Soul aficionados take amphetamines not only because they act as a stimulant to keep dancers and record collectors awake, not only because they induce people to talk (and overtalk) and thus forge friendships with people from other towns, but also because amphetamines are part of a whole bundle of different factors that gather together to make up the style of Northern Soul. Since the early arrival of imported American soul music in Britain in the sixties, the rare records, the energetic dancing and the forbidden fruits of the local chemist shop have gone hand in hand. Whether it is right or wrong to take amphetamines is open to debate but to deny their complex co-existence with Northern Soul is to deny the truth. However, the motto on the badge commemorating the last night of Wigan Casino was not about drugs but about the music. In a final gesture of humour the motto read, 'Time passed you by'. The single most important

feature of Northern Soul is its respect for the music of Black America.

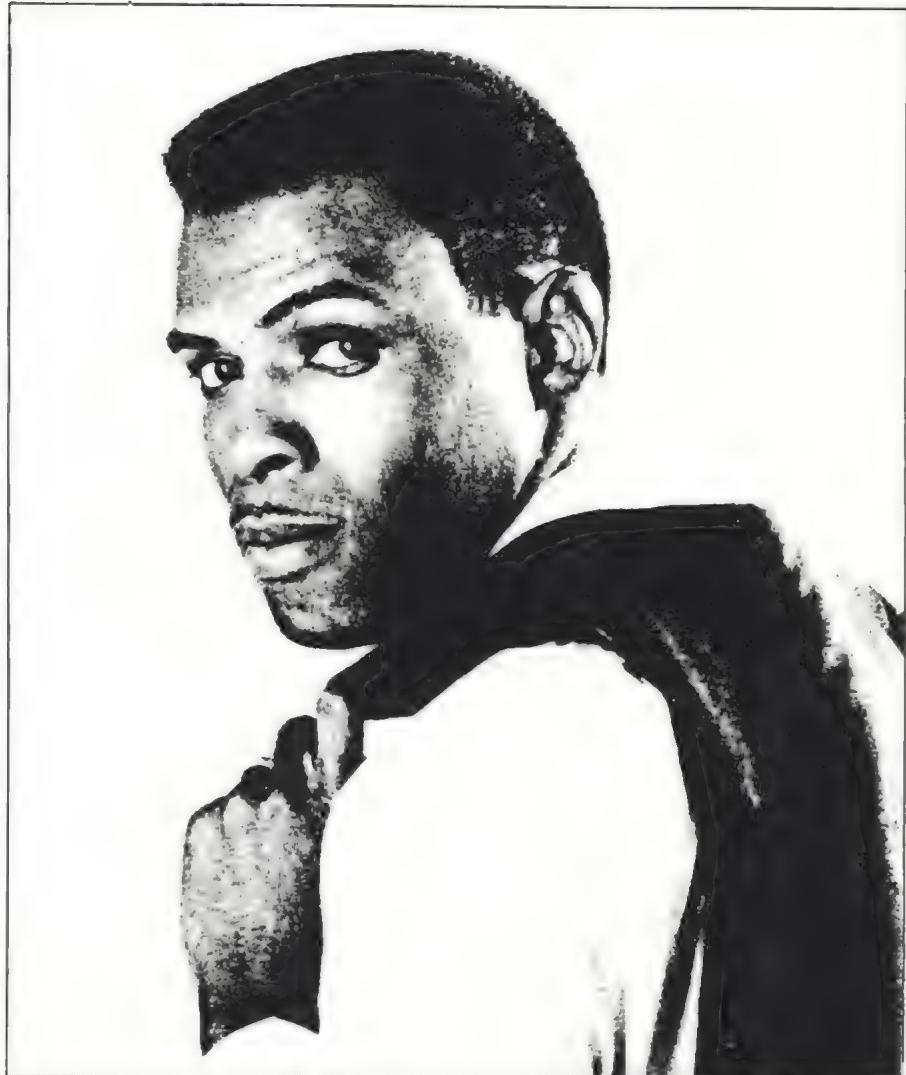
### Let the Music Play

The *Blue Cat* label is one of hundreds of small labels committed to releasing soul music that has a collectors' reputation on the rare soul scene. Its general reputation is founded on the Ad-Libs' classic "Boy From New York City" but on the Northern scene it is particularly associated with uptempo dance records by Sidney Barnes and Didi Noel. The latter's version of the catchy "Let the Music Play" is both a classic and a testament . . . Let the music play, let it play forever. There is a strong belief that Northern Soul is, by its very nature, special music. Music that transcends trends and fads to become music that will last forever. This belief in the supremacy of the music explains a very strong current of dedication within the scene which encourages regulars to adopt pseudonyms from rare record labels (*Ric-Tic* from Wolverhampton), to tattoo the names of legendary labels such as *Okeh* on arms and wrists

and to set about collecting the entire catalogue of obscure and long forgotten labels.

The emphasis on rare soul and the relative uniqueness of the Northern scene can be traced back to the first wave of imported soul music in the sixties. Originally the attraction of imported Black music was both its roots in dance beats and the manner in which it marked the owner out from those content with the formulaic records on the BBC playlist. The period of the mid-sixties saw the emergence of the mod sub-culture in Britain and the establishment of Black owned independent record companies in the U.S.A. Although the mods disappeared (only to reappear in a different form in the late seventies), many of the companies like Berry Gordy's Motown group grew and diversified. The Northern scene began to establish its own venues and they became increasingly distinctive as the policy of unique style became a more conscious policy in favour of rare, unknown soul. The collectors and the D.J.s turned their attentions away from the Motown labels when they became too well known and too

readily available. This shift can be pinpointed from 1965 onwards. After years of distribution through other labels including *London-American*, *Fontana*, *Oriole*, and *Stateside*, in March 1965 Motown released the Supremes' "Stop in the Name of Love" on their own *Tamla Motown* label. The search for music which maintained the distinctive features of the Detroit sound (up-tempo beat, exchanging vocals and saxophone breaks) lead the collectors of the North to explore other lesser known labels: *Mirwood*, *Ric-Tic*, *Wingate* and *Revilot*. This shift towards lesser known American labels also coincided with a more general awareness of the R'n'B catalogue of companies like *Cameo Parkway* and *Chess* who were already established in the pop and blues markets respectively. It was during this period that the Northern scene first discovered the recordings of people like Edwin Starr and Laura Lee (who later joined Motown when their recording company *Ric-Tic* was bought over by Berry Gordy). It also saw the appearance on the British soul scene of people like Jimmy Conwell, Earl Harrison and Leon Haywood who had no previous reputations.



Leon Haywood



The consolidation of rare soul as a defining feature of the Northern scene also firmly established the central importance of Detroit as the mythical capital of the scene. Even today, years after Motown had moved their commercial base to the West Coast, Detroit labels have a special significance in the North. Ric-Tic, Wingate and Revilot remain strong favourites and have now been joined by a host of the other Detroit labels including Premium Stuff, Magic City, Deto, Big Hit and Kool Kat. Similarly, Detroit has given birth to a formidable list of Northern celebrities of whom Rose Batiste, Ronnie McNeir and Black Nasty are only a few. The Terra Shirma studio in Detroit has probably been the birthplace of more rare Northern records than any other studio and the production work of the Detroit based pair Richard 'Popcorn' Wylie and Tony Hester is equally established. In fact, after many years, Popcorn Wylie's "Rosemary What Happened" (an atmospheric dancer based on the story of *Rosemary's Baby*) remains a highly sought after collectors' record.

The rare soul policy has at least three related factors. Firstly, rare music invariably means specialist venues offering the most complete collection of sounds and this in turn encourages Northern fans to travel very long distances to clubs. Secondly, the laws of supply and demand invariably mean that high prices are asked and paid for rare records. This has tended to confuse and annoy outsiders who become indignant at the prices that records change hands for. The sale of James Fountain's "Seven Day Lover" on William Bell's Atlanta based Peachtree label generated hostility when around £200 changed hands. But there is always a semblance of sanity on the scene brought about by collectors who carry an encyclopaedic knowledge of the music, and often advise others including the D.J.s on their purchases. Perhaps the most immediate problem of rare soul, which far outstretches the importance of big prices, is the existence of bootlegging. The threat that a bootlegger may identify a rare record, press up illegal copies, and make them available at just over £1, is a pressing problem (and a problem of pressings). The Northern scene has sought to combat the immediate problems of bootlegging

by inventing a system of cover-ups whereby rare records are given a new title and are credited to artists who are either entirely fictional or who are established singers with an already proven reputation on the scene. Thus a record like the Coasters' recording of "Crazy Baby" was referred to as "My Heart's Wide Open" and was credited to a non-existent soul singer Freddie Jones. This white lie about Black music allows the record to establish itself with the dancers before it is prematurely released or bootlegged. The persistent problem with cover-ups is that it makes genuine collection more difficult and it tends to generate a cult of imitation. Disc Jockeys have recently tried to cover a Wilson Pickett record which is neither particularly rare nor in any need of the kind of protection that the cover-up is designed to give.



Despite the Northern Scene's undeserved reputation as a sub-culture which sticks rigidly to old and inferior versions of the Detroit sound, there is in fact a massive range of Northern records which defy this reputation. It is quite possible for a D.J. to programme three records one after the other. The first might be a cover version of the Motown classic "Love is Like an Itching in My Heart" by Jenny and the Jewels on Hit Records; the second might be a much slower ballad number like Keanya Collins's "Love Bandit" which at time threatens to be a ballad, and the third might be the raucously progressive "Psychedelic Soul" featuring the screeching sax and gruff vocals of Chicago session musician Saxie Russell. The range of Northern Soul is wide enough to encompass the sophisticated sixties R'n'B record "Looking For You" by Garnett Mimms, the uptempo beat of Jackie Wilson's "The Who Who Song", the Philly-influenced elegance of Oscar Perry's "I Got What You Need" and the left field Miami funk of the Delreys Incorporated's "Destination Unknown". Although the relationship between a record and its rarity is always likely to be complex it is difficult to make any sweeping generalisations about the quality of Northern Soul. Many records are not in fact prized for any intrinsic qualities but for their ability to generate atmosphere in the middle of an all-night session. Very few people would argue that Sam and

Kitty's "I've Got Something Good" was a good record but it is undeniably a record that builds up atmosphere and attracts the dancers. But there is quality in Northern Soul and there is a very high level of respect for some records. The name of the late Linda Jones has been trendily sprinkled on the pages of the *N.M.E.* and *The Face* but none of the clubs that those magazines give space to actually get round to playing any of Linda Jones' uniquely soulful records. The cult status that Linda Jones and Lorraine Ellison enjoy in conversation is rarely backed up in practice. The Northern scene's dedicated exposure of "My Heart Needs a Break" and "I Just Can't Live My Life" remain Linda Jones' only consistent public exposure in Britain. If a catalogue of names is any guide to quality then the last night at Wigan Casino had much to commend it. Nancy Wilson, Jodi Mathis, Anne Sexton, Jean Carn, Alice Clark and Esther Phillips were only a small proportion of the female vocalists played through the night. The search for rare soul dancers continues and the easier access to the U.S.A. has given collectors more possibilities. A small army of soul experts regularly scan the surface of American cities driven on by the unshakeable belief that in the next rack will be a promotion copy of an uptempo sound which the company lost faith in. It should preferably be one of only a few in the world featuring the lead vocals of a guy recently convicted of murder, and the demanding saxophone of a bank

robber. The Northern rarity is a strange and irresistible breed: Darrell Banks, the singer who popularised many Northern classics including "Open the Door to Your Heart" and "Angel Baby" murdered in a gunfight; Johnny Braggs, the singer of "They're Talking About Me", convicted to three life sentences, and Frankie 'Love Man' Crocker the talk-over D.J. on "Ton of Dynamite" jailed as a payola racketeer. The Northern Soul singer, like the scene itself, strays down the Backstreets of a twilight world.

### Come On Train

Don Thomas's excellent recording of "Come On Train" on the independent San Francisco label *NUVJ* emerged at a critical period in the development of Northern Soul. The scene had two particularly thriving clubs in Wigan Casino and Blackpool's Mecca Highland Room. The scene was put under considerable adverse pressure by the media who turned to it in a brief search for something different. The appearance of several particularly crass and offensive articles in the *Daily Express* and the *Daily Mirror* together with the kiss of death from the unimaginative lips of Tony Blackburn (who actually recorded a 'northern' record under the pseudonym of Lenny Gamble) threatened to devastate the scene. This problem was made worse by the attitude of two powerful D.J.s - Ian Levine who was then a regular at the Mecca and Russ Winstanley the managing D.J. at



Edwin Starr as "Agent 00 Soul"

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Wigan. On the one hand the Mecca followed a policy of exclusive new rarities programmed alongside the more soulful kind of contemporary disco. The Casino meanwhile remained loyal to rare soul but also increased its output of old Northern standards and at times was guilty of playing records which had no real place on a soul scene. This split became generally known as 'oldies versus funk' even though both clubs still played many records in common. The situation was made worse by the other interests of the major D.J.s who, during the period of media attention, became involved with various different record companies. Ian Levine certainly used his position to advance his own productions with Chicago soul singers such as L.J. Johnson, Barbara Pennington and Evelyn Thomas. Some of the Wigan D.J.s were less than honest about their dealings with record companies and with the bootlegger Simon Soussan, one of the *enfant terribles* of Northern Soul. Almost simultaneously with some of these problems was the entry into the pop charts of a notoriously awful cover version of a record called "Ski-ing in the Snow" by the Invitations. The cover was made by a dire pop group calling themselves Wigan's Ovations (the name being a mixture of the North's top venue and a highly respected harmony group The Ovations who record on Gold-wax). Needless to say they had nothing whatsoever to do with Northern Soul. The enthusiasts knew they didn't but the media and many other music followers thought they did. Out of this debacle two tendencies emerged. Firstly, a significant number of people, many of whom had been long devotees, became more attracted to the emerging attractions of quality disco and later jazz/funk. Many of them left the scene to move to other soul clubs in Manchester, Leeds and London. Some of them like Steve Strange, Chris Sullivan and David Ball drifted elsewhere to indulge in a cocktail of Bowie, punk and futurism to re-emerge

as Visage, Blue Rondo a la Turk and Soft Cell. Many others drifted back towards the north when nothing else could satisfy the attraction of rare soul. The other current within the scene remained loyal to Wigan as a venue and to its mixed playlist. But the oldies and newies schism has remained a problem until the present day.

The closure of Wigan Casino was immediately followed by several competing attempts to establish a new replacement venue. The management of the Casino acting in their own best interests announced another all-nighter for the week after the one that supposedly marked the end of an era. This announcement was almost certainly done to destabilise a new venture in the North jointly organised by one of the scene's most respected Disc Jockeys, Richard Searling, and a collector of long standing, Bernie Golding. This new venture is



undoubtedly the best future for the scene but it is open to doubt whether it can survive against the mammoth institution of the Wigan Casino management. Whatever the outcome the scene will rebuild its future because Jackie Wilson, Etta James, Jerry Williams, The High Keys, The Carstairs and Little Ritchie are undoubtedly more central to rare soul than the people who act as D.J.s for their records. In cities all over Britain they'll be waiting for the train to come on. Don Thomas's lyrics sum up the feeling of many Northern Soul fans faced with a future without the Casino: "Travelling from country and city to city, trying to find somewhere to belong . . . So come on train!"

## SECRET PLEASURES

The editors illegally home-tape their cassette selection for the newish year.

I Fall to Pieces Patsy Cline from *The Patsy Cline Story*. MCA MCF 2600  
For Once in My Life The Righteous Brothers. MGM 2683 003  
I've Got You Under My Skin The Four Seasons from *The Four Seasons Story*. Private Stock DAPS 1001  
I'm Still Waiting The Wailers. CBS 31584  
Candy Big Maybelle from *The Roots of Rock n Roll*. Savoy 2221  
Through It All Delores Barrett Campbell from *The Soul of Black Music*. Sonet SNTF 796  
Angels Albert Ayler from *The Village Concerts*. ABC 1A 9336/2  
The Wind Chet Baker from *Chet Baker and Strings*. CBS JCL 549  
Let's Go Away for A while The Beach Boys from *Pet Sounds*. Capitol DT/T 2458  
Santa Claus is Coming to Town Joseph Spence from *Living on the Hallelujah Side*. Rounder 2021

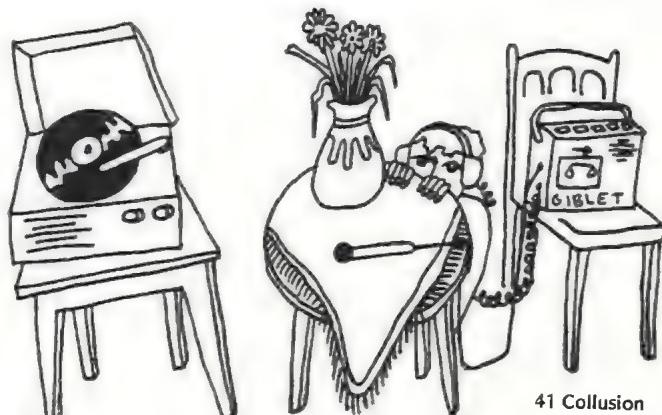
D Toop

Ajwan's Lina No. 2 The Victoria Kings Band. EMI-Snake (Kenya).  
I have a Boyfriend The Chiffons. RCA from "Everything You Wanted to Hear . . ." Wonderful new compilation album  
Islay Malt Jitterbug Han Bennink and Misha Mengelberg. ICP (Holland).  
Mumblin' Guitar Bo Diddley. Chess Masters double album.  
Ataypura (High Andes) Yma Sumac. Capitol, from "Voice of Xtabay".  
Felices Dias-Danza Orquestra Les Cavalliers. Tropical (US) from "Danzas de Puerto Rico".  
Buck Dance Rhythm Slim Gaillard. Midisc (France).  
First Piano Improvisation by Edward Elgar. EMI from "Elgar on Record". Hidden away in 6-record set.  
The Look in Your Eyes Maze, featuring Frankie Beverley. Capitol from "Live in New Orleans". Never off my cassette deck.  
I Get Along Without You Very Well Chet Baker. Pacific Jazz from "Chet Baker Sings". Heart-breaking limpid West Coast cool

S Beresford

"Itzle! je Delyo hajdutin" women singers bagpipes from "Village Music of Bulgaria" (Nonesuch Explorer Series H-72034)  
"Java" — Augustus Pablo from "Melodica Melodies" (Trojan TRLS 200)  
"Jalo" by Etoile de Dakar from Senegal, off "Sound D'Afrique", (ISSP 4003)  
"Yo regresare" by Celia Cruz and Tito Puente Orchestra: "Quimbo Quimbumbia" (TICO SLP-1193)  
"You don't Own Me" by Dusty Springfield off "You don't have to say you love me" (Contour CN2016) Dusty laying down her independence  
"I'm Sorry" — "Best of Brenda Lee" (Tee Vee Records TV 1017)  
"Gloomy Sunday" by Billie Holliday from "Original Recordings" (CBS 66407) — what can I say?  
Side Two — "Juju Music of the 80s" by King Sunny Ade (SALPS 524) continuous track of the definitive and best in juju music,  
"Animal Spacier" — from "Return of the Giant Slits" (CBS 85269)  
"Antarctica" — sounds of wildlife, icebergs moving, blizzards recorded by Edwin Mickleburgh (Saydisc SDX-219)

S Steward



41 Collusion

## The Artist's Manipulation of the Media



He sat and waited for what seemed hours, looking down upon the remains of his strudel'n'hot choc, the best to be had in London's fabulous 'Tin Pan Alley' (Denmark St.), served in the hottest diner around, *The Gia*, watering place for the cream of the music biz, especially the staff of some of the biz' crack publishing houses.

Which image could he present? Speedy? Cool? The *charisma*. How to make quite certain that the aura is *really* working. The right look. The perfect *feel*, tailored specifically to meet the requirements of that *truly* special someone who might write things which could create a vast new audience for the (hopefully) secretly struggling artist.

'Hi! Tell me, Lol. What led you to become improvised interestintation?' 'Hey! That's really good. Well . . .' 'But surely the transition from trad to fusion music must have been a great drain on your resources, especially physical and mental?' 'Actually, I've never played trad and I'm not particularly interested in what you and most other journalists think of as being fusion music.' 'Yeah, yeah. Pull the other one.' 'Look, I didn't ask you to . . .' 'Don't tell me what you didn't, mate. I've got an article to write.' 'I'm trying to be helpful.' 'Helpful my arse. Since you played with "The Damned" you think you're bleedin' God.' 'Listen, I've done some duff things in my time, but don't lay that one on me. I'm not responsible.' 'Ah! Now we're getting somewhere. Who would you say is your main man, man? On whom do you model yourself?' 'Acker Bilk.' 'So you do admit to having been a traddie.' 'No. I was lying.' 'In that case, how would you explain away the fact that I saw you playing "Stranger on the Shore" in Leicester Square?' 'How do you know I wasn't miming?' 'Evasions. Evasions.' 'Alright. I was playing it for a nice old lady.' 'I'm deeply touched.' 'Piss off.' 'Come on, man, cool it.' 'Let's both cool it. Next question.' 'Can we talk about your busking days?' 'They're over. Next.' 'Right. Your bizarre sense of humour.' 'Haven't got one.' 'Ha Ha. Right on. I asked for that one. Beautiful man. Just beautiful. I saw you with "Company". Thank God they had at least one comic saxophone player.' 'I didn't do anything funny.' 'Come on, man. Those boots. Broke me up.' 'They were the only ones that I had at the time.' 'Suit yourself. Let's get back to the music.' 'About bloody time.' 'Lol. Tell me, what's Harry Padovani really like?' 'Foreign bloke. Black hair.' 'Look. It's all so easy for you, isn't it?'

'Well . . . special people *always* have an easy time of it. I love my lifestyle and quite frankly I wouldn't care to change it. Not even for social advancement.' 'I can quite see why, but if you *had* to change completely, what do you think might interest you?' 'Well . . . I'd quite like to be a trad musician about to make the transition to fusion music. Such a prospect could be really exciting to me.' 'Right. right. Did you *really* play with Hendrix?' 'I could tell you *anything*. Why don't you ask him?' 'He wouldn't answer.' 'Probably because it's a stupid question.' 'Why are you so bloody stroppy?' 'Sorry. What was that?' 'I asked why you're so . . . difficult.' 'You want to know that? I'll tell you. Many years ago there lived a sailor man who married my mum and then they had me. He had a really important job and sometimes was instructed to kill people. He usually managed to avoid doing so and often brought me chocolate and things. When I grew up I became so tremendously popular that I found it obligatory to answer questions put to me by sincerely motivated personages, such as yourself and . . .' 'You cagey bastard. Right. I'm through with time-wasting. Let's try another angle. As an elder statesman of the genre . . .' 'Are you sure you know what you're talking about?' 'What?' 'How did you come by this job?' 'You mean how did I enter the profession of music journalism?' 'Yes.' 'Well . . . I've always loved music — we call it sounds — even classical and I know that musos (that's musicians) are usually misunderstood by the general public, who, let's face it, are pretty thick. Most of them wouldn't know Roland Alphonso from Donald Alphonso.' 'We can do without your bizarre humour, thanks.' 'I don't think that it was a good idea for you to nick that tune from Mike.' 'I didn't.' 'No. No. Course not. Silly of me. Nudge nudge.' 'Don't happen to know the time do you?' 'Time? Hey! Must go. Doing Sheena, Grace and Hump at the Mayfair. Thanks. bye. Beautiful Lol.' 'Hang on. Alright. I'm sorry. Okay? I know I've been a drag, but everything is so confusing for me these days . . . wait . . . I've got this leg . . . there's so much . . .' 'See ya Lol.' 'But what about the "Cherry Red" compilation . . . and I'm on the B side of "Tubular Bells" single . . . Tokoloshe Man' . . . Brax . . .

'What'd you like?' 'Strudel'n'hot choc.' 'Where's your mate gone?' 'Got a gig. Pushing fake equity cards.' 'You an actor?' 'Leave it out.'

by Lol Coxhill

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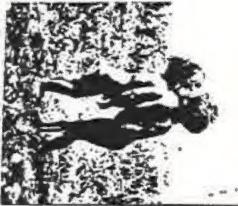
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 Thu 28 YORK Arts Centre 8pm  
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Sun 21	SHEFFIELD Crucible Theatre 7.30pm
Mon 22	COVENTRY Warwick University Arts Centre 7.30pm
Thu 25	TELFORD Madeley Court Theatre 8pm
Sat 27	DARLINGTON Queen Elizabeth VI Form Coll. 8pm
Sun 28	NOTTINGHAM Playhouse 8pm

Further details from venues or from Contemporary Music Network, Arts Council of Great Britain, 9 Long Acre, London WC2E 9LH. Tel 01-379 7717

## NATIONAL TOURS



Ciao! I'm Ennio Morricone and you can read about the good, the bad and the ugly of the music world (as well as me and my film scores) in the first issue of COLLUSION. Copies are still available. Roberto Masotti took this photograph.

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Hi! We're the Lijadu Sisters and you'll find us in this issue of COLLUSION.....

